

SHELTERS OR SANCTUARIES?:
PRACTICAL THEOLOGY, PASTORAL CARE AND COUNSELING,
AND HOMELESSNESS

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In Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

by
Jill Lynnae Snodgrass

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This Dissertation, written by

Jill Lynnae Snodgrass

under the direction of her Faculty Committee and approved by its members,
has been presented to and accepted by the Faculty of
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Faculty Committee:

Kathleen J. Greider, Chairperson

K. Samuel Lee

William M. Clements

Academic Dean: Susan L. Nelson

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ABSTRACT

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Jill Lynnae Snodgrass

As homeless shelters are frequently supported and run by Christian organizations, the provision of pastoral care and counseling is a common practice. However, theory and research investigating how homeless persons experience pastoral care and counseling in shelters is extremely limited. Thus, current programs in pastoral care and counseling are largely based on theories and practices developed in and for other contexts. Moreover, no data exists documenting the effectiveness of those theories and practices for pastoral care and counseling of homeless persons and families. This dissertation utilizes practical theological methods to explore how pastoral care and counseling services are received by the residents of the Our House Shelter in Pomona, California – a ninety-day emergency homeless shelter – and how those services can be improved.

Using Don S. Browning's revised correlational approach to practical theology, this dissertation draws on ethnographic research methods, employing the software program NVivo 8, to construct thick description of the current practice. The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with sixteen past shelter residents and engaged in participant observation by working and living in the shelter. In light of such thick description, an interdisciplinary review of literature serves as a dialogue partner to reflect on current practice. The theory examined in this study includes psychological and sociological theory on homelessness, pastoral theology of economics, theory on

intercultural pastoral care and counseling, and the theological insights of Martin Luther King, Jr. and liberation theology.

Through dialogue between current practice and theory, a call for revised praxis is then posited. Augmented practices in the individual and group counseling processes, as well as in the care provided by shelter staff, volunteers, and congregational partners, are necessary in light of the wisdom of both the research partners and the interdisciplinary theory. The researcher's commitment is to learn how better to care for the residents of Our House, with such care emerging from a liberative, prophetic, and Christ-centered ethic.

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CHAPTER 1

“HOMELESSNESS IS THE FRUIT OF OPPRESSION.”¹

Introduction

“Most of us kept ourselves looking right, so it wasn’t like, we didn’t look like homeless people ... We would make jokes all the time about homelessness and we would say like we’re the most unhomeless homeless people we know.” After weeks spent scrounging for motel vouchers and ninety days in an emergency shelter with her two children, LaToya’s comment illustrates well the misunderstanding of homelessness in the U.S. While scholars and researchers were awakened in the 1980s to the reality of homeless women and children, this is not the population blatantly visible to the average American. Moreover, as many in the U.S. attribute homelessness to laziness, alcoholism, or mental illness, the actual population is even more veiled. Truly, homelessness wears many faces: the man resting on the bench in the village, propped up by his garbage bag full of belongings; the children “doubled up” in a one bedroom apartment with two other families; the single grandfather, raising his three grandchildren in a family shelter as their mother is incarcerated; the sales woman at the local high-end department store, bringing you a smaller size of a St. John sweater. In order to offer service and support to this diverse demographic of homeless men, women and children, caregivers need to recognize the uniqueness of the homeless experience and respond to the actual, rather than the misperceived needs of homeless individuals and families today.

¹ Alice K. Johnson and Judith A. B. Lee, “Empowerment Work with Homeless Women,” in *Women in Context: Toward a Feminist Reconstruction of Psychotherapy*, ed. Marsha Pravder Mirkin (New York: Guilford, 1994), 408.

The Research Problem

Homelessness is a widespread and growing problem in the U.S. The need for effective programs of care is rising accordingly. Homeless shelters offer a variety of services and resources ranging from hot showers and hygiene products to job skills training and mental health care. It is not unusual for homeless shelters with ties to religious communities to offer pastoral care and pastoral counseling services. Defined as a “helping act,” pastoral care with the homeless includes such acts as fellowship over a Sunday evening meal, welcoming homeless children to Vacation Bible School, or opening up one’s ear to listen to the joys and concerns of the day. Pastoral counseling with the homeless is the provision of mental health treatment in a way that integrates spiritual resources toward one’s healing and growth. Outreach to the homeless has been and continues to be a common service of the Christian church as well as other religious communities.²

While it is a common practice of faith-based shelters to provide pastoral care and counseling services, theory and research investigating how homeless persons experience pastoral care and counseling in shelters is extremely limited. Thus, current programs in pastoral care and counseling are largely based on theories and practices developed in and for other contexts. Moreover, no data exists documenting the effectiveness of those theories and practices for pastoral care and counseling of homeless persons and families. Therefore, this dissertation aims to examine the current pastoral care and counseling

² A biblical foundation for serving the homeless is found in scriptural passages such as Lev. 25:35-36, Isa. 58:6-8, and Matt. 25:34-40. Based on this biblical imperative, some of the many church- and faith-based organizations offering pastoral care and counseling to the homeless in the U.S., U.K., and Canada include: Interfaith Action of Evanston; UNLEASH: Church Action on Homelessness; Churches Action for the Homeless (CATH); Public Action to Deliver Shelter, Inc. (PADS, Inc.); Room in the Inn; and Out of the Cold. Information describing each of these organizations is available online.

practices at a single emergency shelter, to dialogue with interdisciplinary literature related to homelessness, in an effort to call for a revised praxis of care.

Introduction of Research Questions

In August 2006, The Clinebell Institute for Pastoral Counseling and Psychotherapy, a pastoral counseling clinical training center of Claremont School of Theology, began a partnership with the Our House Shelter, a local emergency family shelter operated by the Inland Valley Hope Partners (IVHP).³ Through this partnership the researcher began serving as a Pastoral Counseling Resident offering individual and group pastoral counseling services. The work with shelter residents raised fundamental questions about the effectiveness of the theory and practices shaping the pastoral care and pastoral counseling offered at the shelter.

For example, do shelter residents experience the care and counsel they receive as relevant in light of their backgrounds and cultural locations? The recent downfall of the economy and increase in foreclosures has only exacerbated what has been a steadily growing number and diversity of homeless persons and shelter residents. Shelter residents are diverse in terms of race, ethnicity, and age, but also in religious affiliation, family structure, sexual orientation, education, economic background, and other experiences. Diversity exists even within the shared culture of homelessness, as some residents are chronically homeless while others are without shelter for the first time. What theory and praxis is necessary for pastoral care and counseling in homeless shelters to respond to the diversity of homeless persons?

³ Henceforth, the Our House Shelter will be simply termed Our House, and Inland Valley Hope Partners will be abbreviated IVHP.

How do residents experience the expectation that they should be able to engage in standard format for counseling (keep regular weekly appointments scheduled in advance)? Our House requires that residents attend one mandatory intake session for safety and mental health assessment. If residents desire to continue receiving pastoral counseling services, they are expected to schedule and attend 50-minute sessions akin to other mental health clinics. However, the chaos inherent to residents' lives, including the requirement to be out of the shelter from nine to five, limited access to child care, the unpredictability of job interviews, welfare office lines, bus scheduling, etc. all contribute to the difficulty residents have maintaining appointments. This also requires that residents make and keep appointments according to a strict management of time – a European and European American cultural value that is not shared by most shelter residents. Therefore, what theory and praxis is necessary for pastoral care and counseling in homeless shelters to respond to the chaos of homelessness and the diversity of culturally-determined life skills they possess?

What type of counseling best meets the immediate psychosocial needs of homeless persons? Pastoral counseling can be offered within many different counseling modalities—psychodynamic, cognitive-behavioral, narrative, brief, crisis, and others—but pastoral counseling's emphasis on soul-care has caused praxis to tend toward long-term, insight-based approaches that are unrealistic in the circumstances of this population. At Our House, residents may remain in the shelter for a maximum of ninety days and often struggle with numerous adjustment issues and immediate concerns which require a more integrative therapeutic approach. What theory and praxis is necessary for

pastoral care and counseling in homeless shelters to respond to the crisis situation and the short-term nature of the counseling relationship?

What are the benefits and limitations of group therapy in the context of homelessness and shelter life? The theory of group therapy is that when appropriately facilitated by a therapist, a group can provide a unique context of emotional support. However, in my experience of facilitating a process-oriented support group with residents from various backgrounds and cultures, living in extremely close quarters, and all enduring stressful life transitions, emotional support is seldom realized. For this reason, I have emphasized providing psychoeducation for the group of residents rather than group therapy. How is this mode of group work experienced by residents? Perhaps residents wish for some other form of theory and praxis in group work that could be beneficial to the diverse group of persons trying to live together in homeless shelters.

Finally, how do residents experience the pastoral care provided to them when faith communities are actively involved in the shelter's programs? At IVHP, approximately 80 faith communities provide both financial assistance and pastoral care through such services as furnishing dinner every Sunday evening, welcoming children and youth to summer vacation bible school, and providing food donations through IVHP's two food banks. How are such acts of pastoral care perceived by the residents? Do the residents feel that the volunteers understand their experience of homelessness and that the acts of care offered meet a need?

While not exhaustive, these questions illustrate that the lack of pastoral care and counseling research and theory-development specific to the situation of homelessness is deeply problematic, rendering providers of pastoral care and counseling with

fundamental questions and insufficient data to choose the services most effective for this context and for these persons and families. As such, the researcher's commitment is to learn how better to care for the residents of Our House, with such care emerging from a liberative, prophetic, and Christ-centered ethic.

Pastoral Theological Orientation

Implicitly woven within the above discussion is the researcher's understanding of both the theory and practice of pastoral theology. It is essential to explicitly name my pastoral theological orientation as it colors my analysis of current practice as well as my understanding of what constitutes effective pastoral care and counseling services. In his foundational text *Preface to Pastoral Theology*, Seward Hiltner defines pastoral theology as

that branch or field of theological knowledge and inquiry that brings the shepherding perspective to bear upon all the operations and functions of the church and the minister, and then draws conclusions of a theological order from reflection on these observations.⁴

Pastoral theology is "function-centered": it is concerned with operation while systematic or biblical theology privilege logic, according to Hiltner.⁵ Therefore, Hiltner identifies three functions of pastoral theology -- including healing, sustaining and guiding.⁶ While Hiltner's thought is foundational to pastoral theology, the fifty years following Hiltner's text produced deconstructions and reconstructions of the functions and context of pastoral theology.

An example of this that greatly informs my own understanding is found in the work of Carroll A. Watkins Ali. Watkins Ali finds fault with Seward Hiltner's classical

⁴ Seward Hiltner, *Preface to Pastoral Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1958), 20.

⁵ Hiltner, 20.

⁶ While Hiltner identifies only three functions, pastoral care is commonly understood to include the fourth function of "reconciling," as added by William Clebsch and Charles Jaekle.

definition of pastoral theology in that it accepted “dominant cultural views [as] normative for the conceptualization of theory.”⁷ Rather, according to Watkins Ali, pastoral theology begins with the experiences of those within a particular cultural context. She writes, “Pastoral theology defined this way elevates the importance of contextuality, asserting that the experience of the cultural context is central to theological reflection.”⁸ By locating the point of departure for adequate care within the cultural context of the one(s) receiving care, effective care inherently recognizes the complexity of cultures in which we operate. Watkins Ali contends that although commonalities exist within particular cultures, one should recognize the diversities within cultures rather than assume the experience as universal.

Therefore, Watkins Ali argues that the four traditional functions of pastoral care, that is healing, sustaining, guiding and reconciling, do not sufficiently address the care needs of those within her own African American culture. Therefore, Watkins Ali calls for an expansion of the classical functions to include nurturing, empowering and liberating praxis. Toward that end, Watkins Ali draws on the womanist perspective to posit two guidelines for the pastoral care of African Americans. She writes, “Pastoral care must be willing to respond to the *urgency* of the needs in the African American context ... [and] the attitude of pastoral care should be one of *advocacy* that is embodied in action.”⁹ Watkins Ali then illustrates how healing, sustaining, guiding, reconciling, nurturing, empowering and liberating are enacted in accordance with the above two guidelines. As such, healing requires liberation from oppressive structures; sustaining requires not

⁷ Carroll A. Watkins Ali, *Survival and Liberation: Pastoral Theology in African American Context* (St. Louis: Chalice, 1999), 11.

⁸ Ali, 10.

⁹ Ali, 137.

simply a standing with, in support, but an assurance of day-to-day survival;¹⁰ guiding is enacted from the cultural location of the one receiving care, and the caregiver needs to educate herself toward that end; nurturing requires long-term and consistent care toward liberation; empowering entails giving power to the marginalized and aiding people in claiming agency over their own lives; liberation includes both spiritual and political liberation with the end goal as the cessation of oppression; and finally, it is essential that reconciliation occurs across cultural lines, such as socioeconomic and racial divides. Although I do not share the cultural context out of which Watkins Ali's thought emerges, I choose to employ these seven functions of pastoral care and counseling as a means of constructing a modality of care for the residents of Our House. While the functions themselves are the same, the way in which they are applied is unique to the shelter context.

Evident in Watkins Ali's thought is the notion that context influences pastoral theology as well as the functions of pastoral caregiving. In order to understand the paradigm shift regarding the influence of context that occurred between Hiltner and Watkins Ali, we turn now to the work of Emmanuel Lartey.¹¹ Lartey identifies four historical paradigms of pastoral care and pastoral theology which, although each emerged within a specific historical context, Lartey understands to be co-existing.¹² The first is the "classical-clerical paradigm."¹³ Within this paradigm care is provided by ordained, vested caregivers who embody and manifest the power of the church. This paradigm is

¹⁰ Ali, 138.

¹¹ Emmanuel Y. Lartey, *Pastoral Theology in an Intercultural World* (Cleveland: Pilgrim, 2006).

¹² Lartey builds on John Patton's identification of three paradigms of pastoral care and pastoral theology: classical, clinical-pastoral, and communal-contextual. John Patton, *Pastoral Care in Context: An Introduction to Pastoral Care* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1993).

¹³ Lartey, *Pastoral Theology*, 122.

criticized, as it tends to be Western and individualistic and does not recognize the mutuality of care authorized by the notion of the priesthood of all believers. The second paradigm is “clinical-pastoral.”¹⁴ This paradigm resulted from the influence of psychology, and it has shaped the training of pastoral caregivers throughout the twentieth century. Within this paradigm, primacy is placed on the theories and practices of both theology and psychology. The third paradigm is the communal-contextual model.¹⁵ According to Lartey, “This approach reacts against the clericalization, clinicalization and individualization of pastoral care and pastoral theology. Practitioners employing this model seek to restore these disciplines to their roots within communities of faith.”¹⁶ The focus is on the community of care rather than the individual, making relationality and mutuality central tenets. Lartey entitles the fourth paradigm “intercultural” and contends that it “extends the communal-contextual into a global nexus and asks questions concerning issues of global justice specifically including matters of race, gender, class, sexuality and economics.”¹⁷ This paradigm recognizes the complexity and plurality of our cultural construction and, while recognizing such cultural locations, also seeks to transcend “relativism” and “absolutism.”¹⁸ According to Lartey these four paradigms are mutually operative and the challenge to the pastoral theologian and pastoral caregiver is to recognize the strengths and weaknesses of each paradigm and then implement them in culturally relevant ways.

Therefore, the study that follows is grounded in my own pastoral theological orientation requiring that the functions of pastoral care and counseling be determined in

¹⁴ Lartey, *Pastoral Theology*, 123.

¹⁵ Lartey, *Pastoral Theology*, 123.

¹⁶ Lartey, *Pastoral Theology*, 123.

¹⁷ Lartey, *Pastoral Theology*, 123.

¹⁸ Lartey, *Pastoral Theology*, 124.

relation to the context of the careseeker. It is essential that care transcend the four classical functions of pastoral theology to include culturally- and contextually-relevant functions which, as will be evident in both the research findings and the literature review, includes within the homeless culture the functions of empowerment, nurturing and liberation. Moreover, it is essential that care and counsel emerge from the four pastoral theological paradigms as outlined by Larney as a means of including interdisciplinary theory and practice, both ordained and lay care, and a community-oriented, ecological focus which strives for global justice without colonization.

Rationale for and Description of Practical Theological Method

If the practice of pastoral care and counseling with the residents of Our House is to be culturally and contextually relevant, it is necessary to gain a greater understanding of their experience of homelessness. Toward this end, this dissertation employs practical theological methods in order to construct a revised theory of praxis with the homeless individuals and families at Our House. As an exercise in practical theology this dissertation seeks to create a space “where contemporary experience and the resources of the religious tradition meet in a critical dialogue that is mutually and practically transforming.”¹⁹ Therefore, it is necessary to provide a basic understanding of the discipline of practical theology as well as its methods.

As with any discipline, there is no monolithic understanding of the theoretical and methodological foundations of practical theology. According to Edward Farley, practical

¹⁹ Stephen Pattison with James Woodward, *A Vision of Pastoral Theology: In Search of Words that Resurrect the Dead* (Edinburgh: Contact Pastoral Limited Trust, 1994).

theology did not emerge as a distinct discipline until the eighteenth century.²⁰ Since that time, the focus of the discipline narrowed twice, gaining greater clarity and specificity. First, by the nineteenth century practical theology was distinguished from “ethics and issues of social and individual moral life” but was considered to include the following five subdisciplines: “homiletics, catechetics, liturgics, church jurisprudence and polity, and pastoral care.”²¹ Therefore, practical theology was concerned with the ongoing activity of the church. The discipline later narrowed again to include “five discrete areas of pedagogy corresponding to the five major activities agreed upon by the consensus” and was thus limited to the university or seminary setting.²² Farley asserts that each narrowing of the discipline occurred with a corrective and practical theology began “gaining a new shape ... [as] an academic discipline of its own” in the 1960s which included contributions from scholars throughout the world.²³ Furthermore, while an exploration of the philosophical underpinnings of practical theology is beyond the scope of this study, it is important to note that, according to Marcel Viau, practical theology is grounded in the pragmatist branch of empiricism and therefore does not value reason above experience. Therefore, Viau understands practical theology to have “broken free

²⁰ Edward Farley, “Interpreting Situations: An Inquiry into the Nature of Practical Theology,” in *Formation and Reflection: The Promise of Practical Theology*, ed. Lewis S. Mudge and James N. Poling (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987).

²¹ Farley, 4.

²² Farley, 4. In an endnote Farley elaborates on his understanding of this consensus when he writes: “By ‘nineteenth-century consensus’ I mean the view of practical theology as the fourth theological discipline which came to prevail in the German theological encyclopedia works and in the German monographs on practical theology. This consensus is operative in a narrowed form in North American theological seminaries from the nineteenth century to the present day.” Farley, 18.

²³ Gerben Heitink, *Practical Theology: History, Theory, Action Domains: Manual for Practical Theology*, trans. Reinder Bruinsma (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), xv.

from its dependence on Dogmatic Theology” as it now attempts to navigate a tension between “institutional discourse” and “experiential discourse.”²⁴

Therefore, the question remains, “What is practical theology?” Although various scholars would answer this question in different ways, this study employs the theory and methods, with some correctives, of Don S. Browning in his text *A Fundamental Practical Theology: Descriptive and Strategic Proposals*.²⁵ I employ Browning’s theory and methods of practical theology as it offers a straightforward, systematic approach that places primacy on the wisdom of both the social sciences and Christian sources of authority rather than, as other practical theologians prefer, giving “conceptual priority of theology over psychology” or the social sciences.²⁶ It is my position that at times the social sciences offer a corrective for theology. Nevertheless, Browning’s work is rightly criticized by both Elaine Graham and Rebecca Chopp.²⁷ As will be expanded upon in Chapter 3, Chopp criticizes Browning’s selection of sources of authority, arguing that they are hegemonic and supportive of oppressive power structures. Graham criticizes Browning for failing to recognize the way in which faith communities engage in moral reasoning through *habitus* in addition to cognitive reasoning. I concur with the criticism of both Chopp and Graham, yet value still remains in Browning’s theory and methods. Therefore, I have taken care to choose sources that compensate for Browning’s

²⁴ Marcel Viau, *Practical Theology: A New Approach*, trans. Robert Hurley and Chantal Tanguay (Leiden: Brill, 1999), x and xii.

²⁵ Don S. Browning, *A Fundamental Practical Theology: Descriptive and Strategic Proposals* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991).

²⁶ Deborah van Deusen Hunsinger, *Theology and Pastoral Counseling: A New Interdisciplinary Approach* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995).

²⁷ Elaine L. Graham, *Transforming Practice: Pastoral Theology in an Age of Uncertainty* (London: Mowbray, 1996); Rebecca S. Chopp, “Practical Theology and Liberation,” in *Formation and Reflection: The Promise of Practical Theology*, ed. Lewis S. Mudge and James N. Poling (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987).

weaknesses by including perspectives that privilege liberation from oppressive structures and emphasize experiential ways of knowing and reasoning.

According to Browning, fundamental practical theology is “critical reflection on the church’s dialogue with Christian sources and other communities of experience and interpretation with the aim of guiding its action toward social and individual transformation.”²⁸ Therefore, according to Browning, the theory and methods of practical theology are intrinsically integrated within what he terms fundamental practical theology. Fundamental practical theology contains four sub-movements including descriptive theology, historical theology, systematic theology and strategic or fully practical theology.²⁹ Browning employs these four sub-movements in the construction of a practical theological methodology which, influenced by David Tracy, he terms a critical correlational approach.³⁰ In contrast to Schleiermacher, Tillich and others who understood practical theology as the application of theory within practice, Browning constructs a fundamental practical theology which moves from “present theory-laden practice to a retrieval of normative theory-laden practice to the creation of more critically held theory-laden practices.”³¹ An oversimplified summary of Browning’s thought is as follows: descriptive theology allows the practical theologian to construct thick description³² of a current practice as a sociological hermeneutic; historical theology then explores what the sources of authority and tradition state about the current practice in an

²⁸ Browning, 36.

²⁹ Browning, 42.

³⁰ Browning, 44.

³¹ Browning, 7.

³² Anthropologist Clifford Geertz coined the term thick description, which, according to Mary Clark Moschella is “a detailed and interpretive description that conveys your understanding of the deep meanings of your observations. Thick description goes beyond the literal and expresses the tacit import of the gesture, word, or action in this particular context.” Thick description, however, is not interpretation. Mary Clark Moschella, *Ethnography as a Pastoral Practice: An Introduction* (Cleveland: Pilgrim, 2008), 197.

effort to determine “normative practice;” and systematic theology is the examination of the “horizon” that is created by the fusion of the sources of authority and the thick description. Finally, strategic practical theology aims to understand concrete practices, examine what praxis should be, and explore why practice should be normative. Inherent to Browning’s practical theology is the concept of reflexivity – that is to say, both the researcher and that being researched may be changed in the process. To put it in Browning’s terms, “Research as dialogue fully acknowledges the possibility that I might change this church or that it might change me.”³³

Therefore, in alignment with Browning’s critical correlational approach, the first step of this study is to provide thick description of current practice. In this study, thick description will be constructed by employing ethnographic research methods, the methodology of which will be described in Chapter 2. Semi-structured interviews with former shelter residents, as well as participant observation, will serve as the basis for a construction of a thick description of the residents’ experiences of homelessness. The second step of the critical correlational approach is to present an understanding of how the sources of authority and tradition speak to the current practice. This will be done in Chapters 3 and 4 through a formal interdisciplinary literature review. The third step is to construct a theory of revised praxis of pastoral care and counseling which emerges from the dialogue between current practice and the central texts both within the Christian faith and from other disciplines.

³³ Browning, 31.

Definitions, Scope, and Limitations

Homelessness

Difficulty arises in any attempt to establish a widely-accepted definition of homelessness. This relates to the diversity of political positions and the way in which conservative versus liberal definitions of homelessness impact policy and government functions. Therefore, this dissertation adopts the federal definition of homelessness put forth by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Accordingly, a homeless individual is defined as

an individual who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence; [and/or] an individual who has a primary nighttime residence that is a) a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designed to provide temporary living accommodations (including welfare hotels, congregate shelters, and transitional housing for the mentally ill); b) an institution that provides a temporary residence for individuals intended to be institutionalized; or c) a public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings.³⁴

It is crucial to note that this definition does not include the thousands of persons “doubling” or “tripling” up, or living in their cars. Furthermore, even this definition makes it difficult to get an accurate statistics regarding the number of homeless individuals and families. This is because it is possible to determine the number of persons residing in shelters, but it is impossible to count the number of individuals and families sleeping on the street, squatting in uninhabitable spaces, or residing with family and friends. Moreover, most shelters are located in urban settings; therefore, the rural homeless simply are not counted. In light of the numerous methodological difficulties, the National Coalition for the Homeless contends that “the best approximation is from a study done by the National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty which states that

³⁴ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, “Federal Definition of Homeless.” <http://www.hud.gov/homeless/definition.cfm> (accessed December 15, 2009).

approximately 3.5 million people, 1.35 million of them children, are likely to experience homelessness in a given year (National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty, 2007).”³⁵

Pastoral Care

The definition of pastoral care employed in this study begins with the commonly referenced assertion that “pastoral care consists of helping acts, done by *representative Christian persons*, directed toward *the healing, sustaining, guiding, and reconciling of troubled persons*, whose troubles arise *in the context of ultimate meanings and concerns*.”³⁶ Accordingly, “representative Christian persons” includes all members of the church and, as such, acts of pastoral care are not limited to those performed by those who are ordained. Furthermore, acts of pastoral care occur in a variety of contexts and are not limited to the confines of the church walls. Finally, although the above definition highlights the classic four functions of pastoral care, as previously indicated I concur with Watkins Ali that empowering, nurturing and liberating are three additional essential functions.

While the above definition delimits pastoral care to the acts of “representative Christian persons,” this study includes the acts of the staff at IVHP, regardless of their religious orientation, as functions of pastoral care. While the staff may not understand the care they provide to be “pastoral” care, they are acting as representatives of the sponsoring religious communities. Staff are meeting the residents’ basic human needs of

³⁵ National Coalition for the Homeless, “How Many People Experience Homelessness?” NCH Fact Sheet #2, July 2009, http://www.nationalhomeless.org/factsheets/How_Many.html (accessed December 15, 2009).

³⁶ William A. Clebsch and Charles R. Jaekle, *Pastoral Care in Historical Perspective* (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1994), 4.

shelter and food, a basic act of pastoral care set forth in numerous scriptural passages. Recall the call in Isaiah 58 to share bread with the poor, provide shelter to the homeless, and clothe the naked, or the injunction in Matthew 19 to sell your possessions and give to the poor. Given the very modest wages paid to them, staff do this work not only for income but also as a form of service. As they nourish both the spirits and the bodies of the shelter residents, they are engaged in work valued by pastoral care.

Pastoral Counseling

According to the American Association of Pastoral Counselors, pastoral counseling is “a unique form of psychotherapy which uses spiritual resources as well as psychological understanding for healing and growth ... Pastoral counseling moves beyond the support or encouragement a religious community can offer, by providing psychologically sound therapy that weaves in the religious and spiritual dimension.”³⁷ Therefore, pastoral counseling is a mental health practice which draws on the research and insights of psychology but integrates, as appropriate to clients’ interest and need, religious and spiritual resources and understandings that are contextually-relevant to the careseeker. Pastoral counseling is enacted by trained professionals of various religious identities who have depth of understanding in both religion and the behavioral sciences. While there are various methods of pastoral counseling, including work with individuals, couples, families and groups, the pastoral counselor is attuned to how systemic and ecological factors impact the experience and presenting concerns of careseekers.

Research Partners

³⁷ American Association of Pastoral Counselors, “About Pastoral Counseling,” <http://www.aapc.org/content/about-pastoral-counseling> (accessed December 15, 2009).

Rather than naming the individuals interviewed as “subjects” or “participants,” my use of the term “research partners” conveys my understanding of them as collaborators and co-creators of this study. Moreover, they are the experts and I am indebted for their willingness to partner with me in this research.

Scope and Limitations

The scope of this study is, in some ways, quite narrow. The empirical research is limited to sixteen research partners from one shelter context. I, the researcher, had a prior professional relationship with a number of the research partners; though I took steps to limit the influence of my familiarity with the settings and persons involved with it, the findings may be biased in some ways. Research partners were aware of my working relationship with shelter staff and therefore may have found it difficult to speak honestly about the program’s shortcomings, particularly related to counseling services. Even those research partners not known to me before the interviews were aware that I work at the Our House Shelter. Perhaps the greatest limitation of this study results from the limited amount of time available to complete both the ethnographic research as well as to study the data. At the same time, as is the case with all qualitative projects, this exercise in practical theology is not intended to be generalizable to other shelters or homeless populations. Though its suggestions for revised praxis at Our House might be useful in other contexts, that possibility would need further research. Finally, the literature upon which this study relies focuses solely on homelessness in the context of the United States and derives from Christian values in relation to homelessness.

Contribution and Related Literature

As an interdisciplinary exercise in practical theology, this research aims to contribute to the literature in three fields: practical theology, pastoral care and counseling, and the broader literature addressing homelessness within various disciplines, such as religion and psychology. First, this study is highly influenced by and related to the literature in the discipline of practical theology. Although the subject matter of this research is distinct, this study approaches the task of practical theology in a manner similar to the work of many authors who employ modified critical correlational method. This study engages both theology and the social sciences in a manner similar to Joyce Ann Mercer's work with children and congregational life by placing primacy on both sources of authority.³⁸ Similar to the work of Carol Lakey Hess and James Newton Poling, this work aims to engage narratives with the end goal of liberating the storyteller.³⁹ While utilizing a broader and more explicit practical theological methodology, this study employs ethnographic research similar to that undertaken by Mary Clark Moschella in her work with Italian American immigrants and draws upon the methodology detailed by Moschella in the book *Ethnography as a Pastoral Practice: An Introduction*.⁴⁰ This study, like all those referenced above, attends to differences in power in a struggle toward greater equity. The greatest distinctions between this work and those noted above is its engagement of the experience of homelessness and of both pastoral

³⁸ Joyce Ann Mercer, *Welcoming Children: A Practical Theology of Childhood* (St. Louis: Chalice, 2005).

³⁹ Carol Lakey Hess, *Caretakers of Our Common House: Women's Development in Communities of Faith* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1997); James Newton Poling, *Render Unto God: Economic Vulnerability, Family Violence, and Pastoral Theology* (St. Louis: Chalice, 2002).

⁴⁰ Mary Clark Moschella, *Living Devotions: Reflections on Immigration, Identity, and Religious Imagination* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2008); and *Ethnography as a Pastoral Practice: An Introduction* (Cleveland: Pilgrim, 2008).

care and pastoral counseling practice. I am unaware of any texts employing practical theological methods that explore pastoral counseling practice.

Second, this study also relates to the literature in pastoral theology, as broadly defined, and pastoral care and counseling, specifically. This study builds on the historical influence of such scholars as Anton Boisen and Seward Hiltner, but attempts to gain relevancy for our current milieu by drawing on the work of such scholars as Carroll Watkins Ali and Emmanuel Y. Lartey. The discipline of pastoral theology was significantly impacted by the contributions of female scholars as well as scholars of color. Such advents revolutionized both the theory and practice of pastoral care and counseling, drawing attention to communal contextual modes of caring, the need for public theology, and intercultural care and counseling.

As such, this study is heavily influenced by the work of scholars in the discipline of intercultural care and counseling, such as Emmanuel Y. Lartey and David Augsburg. I come to this task with the belief that all relationships are intercultural and that appropriate care values our cultural locations rather than negate them. The theoretical writings of Lartey, Augsburg, and many others, which will be examined in Chapter 4, illustrate the fact that if we are to offer care that is healing, sustaining, guiding, reconciling, empowering, nurturing, and liberating, we have no choice but to employ both culturally-informed hermeneutics as well as culturally-relevant prescriptions.

Finally, as an exercise in practical theology, this study is interdisciplinary in design and draws on literature within the disciplines of psychology and sociology, as well as various theological and pastoral perspectives. The experience of homelessness impacts all areas of one's existence, often accompanied by profound changes in several aspects of

one's life. For this reason, it is imperative to formulate an understanding of both theories of and practices with the homeless from the wisdom of various disciplines. Furthermore, practical theology, according to Browning, depends upon the "outer envelope of practical reason," understood as the wisdom from the social sciences as well as religious sources of authority, in order to construct understandings of practice that will clarify rather than obfuscate the wider reality. While some practical theologians, such as Ray S. Anderson, consider the life of Christ and the Christian tradition to be more valuable hermeneutical lenses over and, at times against, social scientific knowledge, there is a general consensus among practical theologians regarding the value and contribution of interdisciplinary study.⁴¹

The unique contribution of this study is two-fold. First, as the discipline of practical theology continues to gain adherence around the globe, it adds to the body of literature that applies various practical theological methods to distinct religious practices. Therefore, in one sense, the subject matter is secondary to the contributions which result from the approach and methods this study entails. However, the second, and perhaps greater contribution of this study results from its direct applicability. As previously noted, pastoral care and counseling are commonly practiced at homeless shelters run or supported by faith organizations. However, there is a limited body of literature addressing pastoral care within the homeless context and, to the researcher's knowledge, there is no theory within the pastoral counseling literature offering insight into the particularities of spiritually-informed counsel in this context. Without an adequate understanding of the experience of homelessness and how care and counseling practices are received, pastoral

⁴¹ Ray Sherman Anderson, *The Shape of Practical Theology: Empowering Ministry with Theological Praxis* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001), 77-186.

caregivers are engaged in practices that thoughtlessly apply theory derived from other contexts. The danger in this is that it overlooks the uniqueness of the homeless experience and, although often enacted with good intentions, risks colonization and degradation. This study aims to provide pastoral caregivers working in the homeless context with a better theoretical understanding and a call for revised praxis that has emerged from research with those for whom homelessness is lived experience.

Outline of Chapters/Structure of Argument

As should now be evident, Chapter 1 presents the research problem and the questions driving this study, locates the pastoral theological orientation of both the researcher and the study, and presents a rationale for the use of practical theological methods. Chapter 1 offers essential definitions, the scope and limitations of the study, and locates this study within the broader literature to which it is related. This chapter concludes with a description of the research setting and the pastoral care and counseling services offered.

In accordance with the critical correlational approach, Chapter 2 presents the reader with an understanding of the research methods employed and then provides a thick description of current practice. In alignment with a postmodern understanding, and acceptance of the reflexive and transactional nature of research, I identify my research perspective before detailing how this qualitative study employs ethnographic methods, constructivist evaluation, and grounded theory as well as the methods for data collection and data analysis. Chapter 2 illustrates the trustworthiness of the study, including attention to credibility, triangulation, and saturation. Following this overview of the

methodology, the remainder of Chapter 2 provides thick description of current practice by relaying the research partners' accounts of their experiences in the shelter.

Based on such thick description of current practice, Chapter 3 follows in the practice-theory-practice methodology of practical theology by presenting theory on homelessness. A summary of the limited literature addressing pastoral care and counseling with the homeless will be made. As practical theology is an interdisciplinary endeavor, Chapter 3 then presents the contributions of two of pastoral care and counseling's common academic dialogue partners--psychology and sociology. The chapter closes with initial reflection on how the literature relates to the practices and experience of homelessness described in Chapter 2.

Chapter 4 then offers a continuation of "theory" by turning away from the social sciences toward religious and theological sources of authority. Chapter 4 provides an overview of liberation theology, the theology of Martin Luther King, Jr., a pastoral theology of economics, and theory related to the practice of intercultural pastoral care and counseling. Each overview concludes with assessment of the values and limits of these literatures with regard to care and counseling in situations of homelessness.

Based upon the thick description of current practice as detailed in Chapter 2, and the interdisciplinary theory and theology presented in Chapters 3 and 4, Chapter 5 calls for revised praxis in the provision of pastoral care and counseling services at Our House. Based upon the findings, Chapter 5 suggests eight revisions for pastoral counseling praxis and recommends utilizing the following four therapeutic modalities toward that end: client-centered therapy, relational-cultural therapy, motivational interviewing and solution focused therapy. Recommendations for revised pastoral care praxis are made as

well for both staff and volunteers. Finally, revised praxis in the shelter itself is outlined based on an understanding of the shelter as sanctuary.

Chapter 6 concludes the study by noting its major insights and contributions. The researcher reflects on amendments to the study design and process in light of current knowledge. Lastly, recommendations for future interdisciplinary research are noted in light of present methods and findings.

Description of Setting

In order to contextualize the thick description as presented in Chapter 2, it is essential to understand the setting and context at Our House. Our House is a ninety-day emergency shelter facility operated by the Inland Valley Hope Partners (IVHP) and located in Pomona, California. Our House is approximately 30 miles east of the city of Los Angeles and borders to the west of the Inland Empire, a Southern California metropolis that is home to 4 million people. IVHP was founded in 1968 by eighteen Christian churches in order to address local issues of hunger and shelter. Today it is supported by close to eighty faith organizations and supports thirteen cities in the Inland Valley. IVHP operates on an annual budget of more than \$1.3 million dollars, with six full-time and four part-time staff members, and an annual average of 150 volunteers.⁴²

IVHP and the shelter are both located on the grounds of a Protestant church. The shelter is a free-standing building consisting of three bathrooms, a living room and kitchen, and eight individual rooms. The shelter houses one single female resident and seven families. Unlike most shelters in the area, Our House accepts couples and families headed by single men.

⁴² Statistics provided by Wytse Visser, Executive Director of Inland Valley Hope Partners, by email on December 21, 2009.

As previously mentioned, The Clinebell Institute partnered with IVHP in August 2006 to offer pastoral counseling services to the residents of Our House. At that time, residents were required to participate in an individual intake counseling session as well as a weekly two-hour group counseling session. They were given the option of continuing individual counseling, or if they preferred, couple or family counseling. The Clinebell Institute aimed to meet the psychospiritual needs of shelter residents through the services of Pastoral Counseling Residents and Interns, individuals who were pursuing their M.A., D.Min., or Ph.D. in pastoral counseling at the Claremont School of Theology. As such, over the three years of the partnership numerous Pastoral Counseling Residents and Interns have provided both individual and group counseling services.

Pastoral Counseling Residents and Interns do not maintain offices in or near the shelter. Rather, counseling sessions take place in a large room of the church adjacent to the IVHP offices, just a short walk from the shelter building. The content of individual counseling sessions is confidential unless the client opts to authorize the release of information.

Due to the diversity of shelter residents, it is impossible to describe a “typical” day; however, there are some commonalities. All residents, regardless of their employment status, are required to leave the shelter by nine a.m. and are not permitted to return until four p.m. Residents eat breakfast on their own and take turns packing sack lunches for those who want them. Depending on the time of year and other circumstances, dinner is either prepared by one of the residents or “leftovers” are delivered by the cafeteria of the local Claremont Colleges. Two evenings a week the residents are required to attend group, one evening with The Clinebell Institute and the

other at Parents Anonymous. At various times, a resident is appointed to the position of Resident Assistant (R.A.) and, for a small wage, takes on additional responsibilities for both the shelter and its residents. This position is viewed as one of power and, as we will see in Chapter 2, often results in significant conflict in the shelter. Nevertheless, numerous research partners noted how they came to consider Our House as more than just a shelter. Freddie stated, “We felt responsibility to keep the [shelter] in order ... we really felt like it was our house.”

At the time this research was conducted, two staff members aimed to meet the needs of shelter residents, in addition to the many volunteers and assistance from other partnering organizations. The role of the housing manager is to oversee the provision of all material needs as well as the day-to-day functioning of the shelter facility. This also includes the enforcement of rules and regulations. The role of the case manager is to help residents meet their goals, which most often entail securing employment, housing, and various types of government benefits. With this basic understanding of Our House and its residents, we turn now in Chapter 2 to gain a more in-depth understanding of the experience of homelessness.

CHAPTER 2

HOMELESSNESS AT OUR HOUSE: METHODOLOGY AND THICK DESCRIPTION OF CURRENT PRACTICE

Introduction

All research is both an art and a science. According to Corbin and Strauss, “The ‘art’ aspect has to do with the creative use of procedures to solve analytic problems and the ability to construct a coherent and explanatory story from data, a story that ‘feels right’ to the researcher.”¹ Therefore, the following study employs scientific means of data collection in an artistic manner that aims to understand better the homeless experience and how the research partners experience acts of pastoral care and counseling.

Researcher Perspective

Prior to postmodernity, social science research was considered objective. The researcher adopted an ostensibly detached position, even in situations of participant observation. In contrast, we now recognize the reflexive and transactional natures of research, accepting that influence is reciprocal between researcher and the social context that is researched. The researcher is innately biased, bringing to the research situation her particular “emotional, spiritual, and professional interests.”² Therefore, researchers are required to develop sensitivity and reflexivity. According to Corbin and Strauss, “Sensitivity stands in contrast to objectivity. It requires that a researcher put him- or herself into the research. Sensitivity means having insight, being tuned in to, being able to pick up on relevant issues, events, and happenings in data.”³ Reflexivity requires the researcher to engage in self-reflection and be “attentive to and conscious of the cultural,

¹ Juliet M. Corbin and Anselm L. Strauss, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2008), 47.

² Moschella, *Ethnography*, 87.

³ Corbin and Strauss, 32.

political, social, linguistic, and ideological origins of one's own perspective and voice as well as the perspective and voices of those one interviews and those to whom one reports."⁴

In addition, in light of our postmodern context, the researcher must be able to identify her cultural location as well as the hypotheses and biases she brings to the research task. As the researcher, it is important to state explicitly that I am a European American female, raised in the U.S. in a middle-class family, and a lifelong member of the United Church of Christ. I have not myself been homeless nor has any one of my close friends or family members. My interest in homelessness emerged from significant volunteer experiences during high school in suburban Chicago, college in Colorado, and a master of divinity program in Nashville, Tennessee. My services often took the form of socializing, playing games, and offering fellowship over meals, in addition to the direct provision of food, shelter, and hygiene services. From playing Scrabble over coffee at a drop-in shelter to sleeping one night a week with homeless men in the fellowship hall, my experiences were both challenging and rewarding, but were not purely positive. Upon beginning my training as a pastoral counseling resident at The Clinebell Institute, I was no longer interested in working with this population. As fate would have it, or a lack of personnel resources required, depending on how you look at it, I began my pastoral counseling training at Our House, seeing clients individually and offering a weekly support group. Therefore, I come to the topic of homelessness with over a decade of checkered experience, but a sincere motivation to provide pastoral counseling with cultural sensitivity to the unique needs and experiences of this population. Moreover, on

⁴ Michael Quinn Patton, *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods*, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2002), 65.

the basis of all these experiences, I bring to this research the hypothesis that aspects of traditional theory and practice of pastoral care and counseling do not adequately meet the needs of homeless individuals and families residing in shelter contexts.

Method

Qualitative methodology aptly fits the research problem, the research questions and the population of the study. Generally speaking, the qualitative approach is useful in attempting to understand person's experiences and the meaning assigned to such experiences.⁵ It allows diverse populations to express their own reality. More specifically, as an exercise in practical theology, this study employs ethnographic methods, constructivist evaluation and grounded theory. Ethnographic methods aim to understand the culture of the research partners – in this case the culture of homelessness. In contrast to a positivist or realist approach, this study is constructivist in nature, recognizing that research participants construct and apply their own meanings to their experiences of pastoral care and counseling, regardless of the intent of such services. Therefore, to borrow Patton's term, this study engages in "constructivist evaluation" from a social justice perspective.⁶ This study aims to determine how research partners from Our House, in light of their marginalized position, evaluate the care they currently receive and give voice to the care they desire. The research intention is not to evaluate the program as a whole, although research partners did provide explicit recommendations related to particular aspects of the program, but to focus more broadly on care and counseling practices. Finally, to a lesser extent, this study employs grounded theory. As an exercise in practical theology, this study calls for revised praxis as a result of the dialogue between

⁵ Michael Quinn Patton, 33.

⁶ Michael Quinn Patton, 98.

current practice and theory. Although formal theory will not be constructed, theoretical implications and revised theoretical understandings undergird any call for revised praxis. In addition, qualitative methods are frequently the methods of choice for those engaging in exercises of practical theology.

Sampling and Research Partners

This study integrates criterion sampling, purposive sampling, and theoretical sampling approaches. First, in accordance with criterion sampling, the sample population was limited to residents of Our House who entered after August 2006 when the Shelter's partnership with The Clinebell Institute began. This resulted in a potential sample population of seventy-three research partners who had been entered into Titanium Scheduler, the computer data-based record-keeping system of The Clinebell Institute. Shelter staff conduct follow-up phone calls with residents one month and six months following their exit to inquire about their present housing status. Therefore, Shelter staff deemed contact by the researcher to be a part of such ongoing follow-up and therefore an element of the residents' informed consent. One unique aspect of this sample population is that, due to both transience and lack of financial resources, only sixty of the seventy-three potential research partners either owned cell phones or provided a number where they could be reached. Of the sixty potential research partners, at the time of the study only forty-one individuals had functioning phone numbers. The researcher attempted to contact all forty-one of those individuals and scheduled interviews with twenty-one. Five potential research partners scheduled interviews but failed to show and did not return the researcher's follow-up phone calls.

Typical case sampling methods were used in that the researcher chose research partners who were typical residents. Not all research partners successfully completed the shelter program; not all research partners chose to receive ongoing individual counseling; and research partners represented a diversity of races, ages, and were both male and female. Finally, theoretical sampling was utilized in that the researcher did not set out to complete a particular number of interviews. Interviewing continued until the point at which the researcher had significant understanding of the concepts presented. This also meant that, as previously mentioned, the researcher continued generating interview questions as the research progressed in order to better understand emergent concepts that were not included in the initial set of questions.

The final sample population consists of sixteen research partners. Of the sixteen research partners, three are male and thirteen were female; eight are African American, seven are Hispanic American, and one is European American; and their ages ranged between 22 and 61 at the time of the interview with an average age of 39. The researcher had prior relationships with eleven of the sixteen research partners, having provided to them individual and/or group counseling services. (See table below).

Table 1. Sample Population Demographics

# of Potential Research Partners	73
# of Potential Research Partners with Functioning Phone Numbers	41
# of Interviews Scheduled with Research Partners	21
# of "No Shows"	5
Total # of Research Partners	16
# of Male Research Partners	3
# of Female Research Partners	13
# of African American Research Partners	8
# of Hispanic American Research Partners	7
# of European American Research Partners	1
Age Range of Research Partners	22-61
Average Age of Research Partners	39

Data Collection

In exploring the place of qualitative research in psychological science, Madill and Gough posit the following five methods of collecting qualitative data: collaborative, interview, naturally-occurring, observational, and structured.⁷ According to their rubric, this study employs two means of data collection: interview and observational. Sixteen (n=16) semi-structured, face-to-face interviews were conducted with former residents in the shelter program (see Appendix A). Fourteen interviews were conducted individually and two interviews were conducted simultaneously, that is, with a couple. Although the researcher wished to interview research partners individually, this particular couple insisted on attending together, which resulted in a much shorter interview and a remarkable lack of depth and engagement. Obviously this may reflect more on the couple than on the method of dyadic interviewing.

Research partners were given four choices of interview location: the administrative offices of the shelter; in their home (for those not presently homeless); a public venue of their choice near their current residence, or; The Clinebell Institute. Research partners did not receive compensation; however, in scheduling interview times I offered to provide a meal or coffee and a snack. The majority of research partners opted to interview over a meal, but those who did not were given a \$10 gift card to Target. Research partners consented by signing the Informed Consent for Interview (see Appendix B) that provided information regarding all details related to the interview procedure and data processing. This form also presented research partners with the option of allowing the researcher to access his or her file at The Clinebell Institute in order to

⁷ Anna Madill and Brendan Gough, "Qualitative Research and Its Place in Psychological Science," *Psychological Methods* 13, no. 3, (2008): 254-71.

utilize case notes from both individual and group counseling sessions as a data source. All interviews were recorded using a small digital recording device and were transcribed verbatim by the researcher.

In addition to use of semi-structured interviews, data was also collected through participant observation. The researcher lived in the shelter for six days, participating in all aspects of shelter life including parenting classes and a weekly house meeting between shelter staff and residents. The researcher also participated in one additional house meeting and a meeting of the organization's board of trustees. During these experiences the researcher took detailed field observation notes, documenting both observations and personal reflections. Throughout the period of data collection the researcher continued to attend weekly meetings of the shelter staff and provide weekly group and individual counseling sessions; however, these aspects of participation were not considered data collection and therefore formal observation notes were not recorded. Notes from participant observation were also transcribed and were treated as text for the analysis.

Finally, data was collected in the form of written case notes from individual and group counseling sessions during the partners' tenure at Our House. Research partners were asked if they would consent to permitting access to their case notes, and in each case permission was granted.

Data Analysis

As is common in both pastoral ethnography and practical theology methods, the data analysis employed in this study consisted of abductive reasoning – a combination of inductive and deductive reasoning.⁸ Inductive reasoning, common to the grounded theory approach, involves allowing the data itself to suggest categories and codes of analysis.

⁸ Moschella, *Ethnography*, 171.

Deductive reasoning involves the testing or “trying on” of particular theories and hypotheses. This study combined these two approaches by allowing categories and themes to emerge organically in addition to posing questions generated from previous interviews. Therefore, while the great majority of research questions remained the same throughout the study, question generation continued as research partners offered recommendations for revised praxis. As they did with data collection, Madill and Gough also construct a categorization for data analysis, consisting of discursive, thematic, structured, and instrumental methods of analysis.⁹ According to this rubric, this study employs thematic and instrumental methods. While thematic methods of analysis are most closely associated with inductive reasoning and grounded theory, instrumental methods of analysis are more akin to deductive reasoning as they are often used to analyze ethnography or participant observation, research designs often employed when the researcher has a particular theoretical or ethical commitment. In this study, the researcher’s commitment is to learn how better to care for the residents of Our House, with such care emerging from a liberative, prophetic, and Christ-centered ethic.

Data consisted of verbatim transcripts of interviews, the researcher’s field notes, and case notes from both group and individual sessions during the partners’ tenure in the shelter. Transcripts from the formal, semi-structured interviews were created from digital recording files and were coded as a means of constructing dimensions, properties, categories and themes depicting the residents’ experiences in the shelter. I entered all transcriptions into the software program NVivo 8 to support the organization of the analytical process.

⁹ Madill and Gough.

Trustworthiness

Several procedures employed both in the design and execution of this study contribute to the trustworthiness of this research. First, in an effort to increase the study's credibility, the researcher's biases were clarified prior to the design of the research. The researcher's biases included the following beliefs: (a) aspects of traditional theory and practice of pastoral care and counseling do not adequately meet the needs of homeless individuals and families residing in shelter contexts; (b) residents experience difficulty in scheduling and attending both group and individual counseling sessions due to the inherent chaos in their lives and to the requirements of the Our House program; (c) shelter living is often disempowering, necessitating an advocacy and empowerment aspect of the care and counsel provided. The researcher stated these biases in the research proposal, as well as in consultation with faculty advisors, as a means of limiting the biases' impact on the study.

Triangulation also adds to the credibility of this study. In order to foster an understanding of the experience of homelessness and to sharpen analysis, the researcher compared data from three different sources – participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and the written case notes from both individual and group counseling sessions. While the use of three sources helps to triangulate findings and increase credibility, according to Corbin and Strauss observation offers much to the research but also includes potential drawbacks. Observation is helpful in that it allows the researcher to detect if research partners are acting in accordance with their self-report. However, researchers often draw inferences from observation without checking the meaning of

such occurrences with research partners. Nevertheless, the use of observation, interviews, and counseling case notes increases the credibility of this study's findings.

In addition, the researcher did not thoroughly engage in a review of the literature until following the collection of data. A literature review was then conducted following the first round of coding and data analysis and prior to a second round of data analysis. This increased the study's credibility by allowing initial coding to be complete before the researcher was influenced by theory and other research findings, particularly in the fields of the psychology and sociology of homelessness.

Finally, in an attempt to demonstrate saturation, after completing fifteen interviews, all data was reanalyzed utilizing the final set of codes. The researcher then conducted a sixteenth interview to determine if significant new codes and concepts would emerge. The interview with the sixteenth research participant generated only two new codes and replicated 44 of the existing codes, thus indicating data saturation and the trustworthiness of the findings.

All qualitative inquiry necessitates examining the research partners' capacity to be self-reflexive: to what extent do the research partners' comments indicate an ability not only to evaluate the services they received from others but also to reflect analytically on the implications of their personal history, personality, choices, and actions? With few exceptions, it is my perception that the seven research partners who had stable housing and were not homeless at the time of the interview engaged in more self-reflexivity. They demonstrated greater ability to reflect on their relationships with staff as a transactional rather than unidirectional and they took greater responsibility for their prior homelessness. In contrast, those who were either homeless again or had continued

homelessness following their shelter stay exhibited more of a “victim mentality” and did not demonstrate self-reflexivity. In many ways, decreased self-reflexivity may be an essential coping mechanism for dealing with overwhelming adversity. Therefore, with the understanding that the narratives presented below represent the truth according to each research partner, we now turn to examine in greater detail the experience of homelessness and of services provided to Our House residents.

Thick Description of Current Practice

In an effort to provide thick description of the research partners’ experiences at Our House, the following presentation is divided into two major sections: first, an overview of the homeless experience and, second, research partners’ reported experiences with pastoral care and counseling. In examining the homeless experience, eight major themes emerged. They include reasons given for homelessness, insights into the culture of homelessness, shelter dynamics, residents’ self-reported psychological status, both the presence and absence of support, homeless parenting, and resources and skill building (see Figure 1). In addition, three major themes surfaced related to research partners’ descriptions of their experiences with pastoral care and counseling. They include encounters with shelter staff, the counseling experience and content, and experiences with shelter volunteers (see Figure 2).

The Homeless Experience

Reasons for Homelessness

Research partners attributed their past and, for some, present homelessness to one, or a combination of, the following six factors: legal difficulties, finances, drug use, eviction, strained or severed relationships, and the economy and/or unemployment. First,

Figure 1

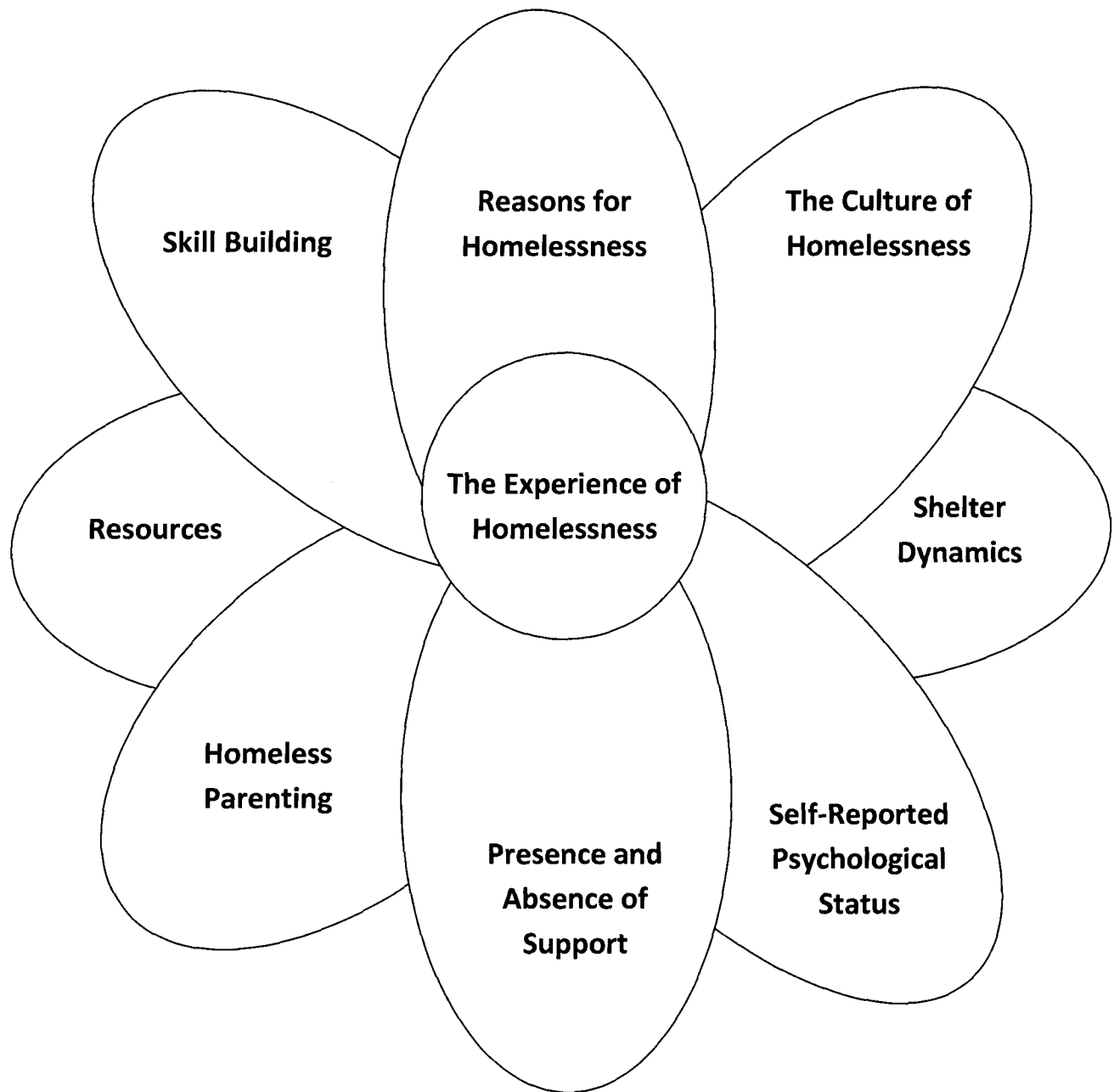


Figure 2

although noted, legal difficulties were not reported to be a major cause of homelessness. Only four of the sixteen research partners commented on the role of past or present legal problems. For one research partner, release from prison left him without a home for himself and his five children. For one couple, regaining custody of their five children resulted in their eviction. One research partner reported that following multiple arrests and convictions for drug possession, she struggled with her family and the courts; she chose to leave her home state, and thus endure homelessness, in an attempt to regain custody of her toddler son who was residing with his uncle in California. In addition to the above situations, multiple research partners shared that they were involved in lawsuits related to anything from discrimination to abuse at the hands of law enforcement.

Second, while one would assume that all homelessness results from a lack of financial resources, like legal causes, financial causes were not considered a significant antecedent to homelessness. While only five of the sixteen research partners were employed upon entrance to the shelter, only five noted finances as a precipitating factor. Three partners noted they had had savings sufficient to support themselves for anywhere from three months to a year and a half before finally having to seek shelter. One partner criticized her poor financial management skills. Another noted that she had been able to double up with family and friends until her bills piled up.

A third reason identified as one of multiple factors leading to homelessness was drug use and abuse. Freddie and Martha had lost custody of their children to DCFS as Martha was caught using and Freddie, although admittedly also using at the time, was charged with failure to protect the children. After over a year of rehab, they regained

custody of their children, only to be evicted by their landlord. Freddie, who believes Narcotics Anonymous or Alcoholics Anonymous should be a required component of any shelter program, started getting high on marijuana at age nine and by eleven was given a form of PCP by his mother. In reflecting on the relation between his homelessness and addiction, Freddie commented that

one of the things that we had accepted was our consequences for using drugs. You know, and it made me understand that even though we're in a shelter, He [God] just always gave me a good attitude because I know it wasn't going to be a quick fix ... I wanted to have a better life, a new life, and, even though we were homeless, we made the best of it. We had goals and we accomplished the goals.

Mary also described how drug use can lead to homelessness.

Like most of us lose our house because of it, because that's where our money goes [drugs]. I'm not even gonna lie. Even if they have welfare and they have kids when they love their kids – and there's not no mother there that don't love her kids – but when you have an addiction, sometimes that baby might need food. But you're going to get sick if you don't get what you need, and you know the consequences, and you know what's going to happen. And the whole time you're going to do what you're going to do, that's running through your head, but you don't stop. It takes a very strong person to stop, or a person who's not an addict, to stop doing what they're going to do for the sake of I'm going to save my house and my family.

Finally, although it is not his personal drug use, Anthony, shared that his present experience of homelessness is, in part, a result of his wife's participation in a religious drug rehabilitation program. Following his release from prison Anthony regained custody of his five young children, but lacked a home in which to raise them. While he grieves for his children, wishing their mother could share in their lives, he questions if it might not be better if she keeps her addiction away from the children.

In comparison to the above noted causes of homelessness, a significant number of research partners highlighted the impact of evictions, strained or severed relationships, and the economy and/or unemployment. Eight of the sixteen research partners noted past evictions, although reasons were quite varied. For many, job loss made monthly rent difficult and, while many had some savings to buy them a few months rent, eventually the landlord would grow weary. Martha's family suffered eviction after regaining custody of their children as they were then found to be in violation of the lease agreement.

And I explained to them [the landlord] that I was getting my kids back and time to time, but because they weren't on the lease and they wanted me to pay like twelve or almost thirteen hundred for one bedroom just for having my kids. And I said that's really, that's crazy. And I said just give me time so I can move or maybe find another place because I was getting family preservation and all that stuff. So they didn't really want to work with me. So I just pretty much they evicted me after they accepted my rent.

Two other research partners shared that although they did not personally experience eviction, the individuals from whom they were renting rooms did and thus they were left without a place to live. Individual states determine how long evictions remain on your credit report and rental history but it can be as long as seven to ten years. The majority of shelter residents do not dispute or contest eviction notices, even in instances of illegal activity by landlords. Therefore, many try to avoid eviction at all costs, as Mary describes.

I had somebody else move in because I didn't want an eviction on my record. Because that's one thing too, like I said, I'm already forty-five. I don't need back credit. I don't need evictions ... I could have stayed living there for months until I got evicted.

Briteny reported hiring a woman to help clear the eviction from her record.

I was paying this lady to clear my eviction. And she was, but wasn't. She like kind of lied. To me she was like a con artist or something. She was

like, “Oh well I can get you an apartment today. And I can give you a list of people that take evictions.” And she didn’t.

But as the economy collapsed in 2009 Briteny’s rental prospects increased. After three years of moving from emergency housing to one transitional housing program after another, Briteny, who had maintained the same job throughout her homeless tenure, finally secured an apartment. She said, “Yeah they work with it [past evictions] because now the economy is so bad, not thank God but you know, um they’re willing to work with your eviction as long as they’re three years old so I was like yeah!”

In addition to eviction, fourteen of the sixteen research partners referenced strained or severed relationships with family members or romantic partners, as either a minor or major cause of their homelessness. Six of the female residents ended relationships with the father of their child or children, most often by their own choice, but then ended up without a place to live. Crystal explained

I split up with my fiancé, which is my daughter’s dad, my ex-fiancé anyway, and we were together for about eight years. And we split up and I pretty much had nowhere to really go. No real family to take me in.

LaToya also broke up with the father of her child. She recalled, “In February I decided I didn’t want to be with the family of my child which was my boyfriend at the time because, I don’t know, things just wasn’t working out.” They opted to remain living together for economic reasons, until her ex decided to stop paying rent. “I guess he started feeling like, to me he started feeling like he wanted me to fall. Like he’s like okay well I’m not paying the rent. I’m not helping you pay the rent or anything.” So LaToya drained her savings until they were both evicted.

For Briteny the decision to end her relationship was motivated by domestic violence. For Jennifer it related to her experience of postpartum depression. She recalled:

After I had my son, my third son, I went through, which I never like told my doctor, but I went through like a postpartum depression. And his father and I were together but while I was going through this I just really disliked him. And I asked, I told him, to leave the house because I didn't really like him too much anymore.

She then attempted to make it on her own, depleted her savings, and was forced to seek shelter. It is important to observe that only women, not men, reported arriving at homelessness following the end of a romantic relationship.

Another manner in which strained or severed relationships leads to homelessness is as a result of "doubling up." Three research partners reported doubling up and staying with family until it got too much to handle. After his release from prison, with his wife residing in a rehabilitation home, Anthony moved in with his sister as he regained custody of his five young children. Though his sister wanted to continue caring for his children, Anthony moved his family into a shelter due to conflict with his sister.

Me and my sister was kind of like falling out, you know. My kids and her kids kept going back and forth. But God loves a child who has his own ... She's still my sister. But at the same time, you know, it was different cause she had my kids. Her intention was to keep my kids, you know. And I wasn't, you know, I wasn't going to let her do that.

While some research partners reported seeking shelter following periods of doubling up, Martha bemoaned the fact that her family would not help them out.

I wish that I had family that would have been there more for me ... A lot of my family own homes and have money. You know we have a house over in Chino and the house is so pretty and a pool and all that, you know ... If you have problems they say, "If there's anything you need let us know" ... It was like a big old BS to me, a lie. And my mom's deceased and my dad still lives with his mom and dad ... But basically I really don't have anybody to turn to otherwise. I wish I had family that was like a lovable family and, you know, like sincere and would do anything for you.

Jamie also attributes the loss of a relationship as a contributing factor to her homelessness. She notes that causes of homelessness are "kind of an individual thing. But

the two components for me was the job number one and my daughter leaving number two.” During Jamie’s intake counseling session at the shelter, she shared that her grief related to her daughter’s estrangement left her unable to deal with her unemployment and past experiences of abuse. According to the research partners, strained or severed relationships can be both direct and indirect causes of homelessness, whether through the literal loss of shelter or the emotional ramifications.

Finally, twelve of the sixteen research partners commented on how either the weak economy or high levels of unemployment contributed to their homeless circumstance. Freddie commented emphatically on the California budget crisis:

I guess what’s happening right now is the government. Arnold Schwarzenegger put a stop to all the housing ... or slowed it down or something. We gotta get rid of that guy. He’s been horrible. I remember when we had two babies before, when we’d get the WIC milk, and we could get like fourteen gallons a month. And now with the two kids we get six gallons [or] eight gallons.

While some research partners reported already feeling the effects of the collapsed economy, others felt anxiety about their futures. Crystal, an aide in the public school system, said

I’m nervous ... Supposedly things are okay, I mean, I work for a district so they already gave people pink slips and they’re already cutting back. There’s already no money. They’re already cutting budgets. But the program I work for is probably one of the last things to be touched. Special education ... But I’m still nervous.

Six research partners reported that they had been laid off or fired prior to entering homelessness. Patricia lost her job with a credit card company after more than ten years of service because she had to go on temporary disability for carpal tunnel syndrome. It was not long before Patricia was evicted and became homeless. It was well over a year before she was hired part-time at an office supply store. While living at Our House, Art

secured employment at a local fast-food restaurant, but when the economy began to worsen he was laid off when business slowed. Some months later he was offered his position back, but by that point he was homeless again and living in his non-functioning, parked car with no busses running early enough or late enough to get him to work.

A third cohort of four research partners were continuously seeking employment, but to no avail. Lisa, a security guard at a local public high school, went to drastic measures in her attempt to secure two jobs.

In December of last, the year before, I had to send my kids out of state and so from that point I thought maybe by them being with my son out of state that would give me a chance to work the two jobs full time and not have to worry about them and their care. I could just see about just stacking money. But then the economy was so bad and I could not find a second job. So I was like okay, at least I work in the summertime and I know in the summertime I could pick up another job, just for my supervisor to tell me three days before summer session was to start ... that I wouldn't be working.

Susan has had the same job, working as a dental assistant, for close to twenty years.

Unfortunately, as the dentist reduced his schedule, she now only has two full days of work during a good week. At sixty-one years of age, Susan worries that her age and experience are working against her in her search for an additional part-time job.

Well I knew it wasn't going to happen right away, but I was figuring in three months I ought to get something. And there's ads in the paper. And my father taught me to always have a plan B. And I'm trying to think maybe they don't want me because I've been someplace for so long that they figure I'm going to ask for a gazillion dollars an hour ... And I don't think there's anything on my resume that says how old I am. So I think there's no sense hiring her because she's going to quit in a couple years to retire. Or something. I mean I've always thought the worst so that I could be pleasantly surprised or I won't be super disappointed because I've already been expecting the worst.

In most cases, homelessness results from an amalgamation of conditions and incidents and, according to our research partners, is often attributed to circumstances both within and beyond their control.

Insights into the Culture of Homelessness

In sharing about their own experiences, research partners provided extensive information about the culture of homelessness. Exploring all aspects of homeless culture would merit book-length treatment in itself; therefore, in this section we turn to examine the facets of homeless culture cited most often by research partners: duration of homelessness, feelings of displacement, a changed conception of time, a sense of belonging, and the stigma of homelessness. First, in considering the duration of homelessness, it is essential to note that, in all cases but one, homelessness was not a one-time occurrence. At the extreme end, one research partner reported that she'd been homeless for five years, moving from place to place. In a laconic manner Wrakishia stated, "Pillow to pillow. For five years." In anticipation of securing her Section 8¹⁰ housing voucher for her and her five year-old son, Wrakishia explained:

And like my therapist now tell me like when I get in there it's going to take me about like a month to adjust that it's mines. She said that I'm still going to have my mindstate like a shelter mindstate.

Although there is a rule against repeat visits to the shelter, Jamie's first and second visits to Our House were over twenty years apart. Jamie knew very little about homelessness at

¹⁰ The Section 8 Rental Voucher Program is administered by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development in an effort to increase affordable housing. Qualified participants receive a voucher, locate privately owned rental housing, and then the Public Housing Authority pays a portion, determined by the participant's income, of the participant's rent.

the time of her first shelter stay. But following her second visit Jamie was technically homeless for a period of almost two years.

In addition to Wrakishia and Jamie, although she is presently homeless, living in a tent in a field with her boyfriend and numerous pets, Mary spoke from her own experience about the chronicity of homelessness when she stated:

I'd say that probably 90% of the people that leave there are still homeless. And probably at least like 50% are in another shelter. And if they're not, then a good percentage will be in the next five years again, or at least one more time in their life. Sometimes, like I said with the transitional, they really get you, they go to the next step, they take you to the NAs and AAs, they put you in an apartment, and then long-term you go through something like that transitional, you're really not going to want to be homeless again. You're going to be trying to stay sober and keep that house.

Briteny's homeless journey started in a motel room when she was pregnant, caring for her other two babies, and with her abusive boyfriend. She had spent multiple nights in her car with her two children while her boyfriend spent the night at friends' houses. After deciding to end her relationship, Briteny called 211 and entered Our House that night.¹¹ She then spent over two more years in transitional housing programs before finally securing her own apartment. When we explore issues of homeless parenting later in this chapter, we will hear what it was like for Briteny to bring a newborn baby home to Our House.

Freddie also had extensive experiences with homelessness. Recalling his homelessness as an adolescent Freddie stated:

The whole summer of my being thirteen I lived in the streets – sometimes I lived with different family, but I had like a lot of weird pride toward even though they told me to stay I would still leave. And a few times I

¹¹ 211 offers community referral resources for health, shelter, counseling, food, employment, disaster information, and other services. It is available in most counties in California and other regions throughout the nation.

would be at the riverbed, you know, by myself with a jacket on, you know, just trying to make it through the night. I always knew I would going to make it through the night ,but I was always cold until about nine o'clock ... I can do that alone, but when you have kids it's really hard, you know, because you don't want them to feel that coldness.

Freddie continued saying how now, as he and his wife rent two rooms in a house for themselves and their five children, they have a lot of blankets. And no matter what, it seems the kids and all their blankets somehow end up in his bed.

As research partners' experiences with homelessness continued, they moved from cars to motels to emergency shelters to friends' homes to cars to transitional housing and on and on. Oftentimes such moves resulted in feelings of displacement. Given the size of both Los Angeles County and the Inland Empire, and the fact that many research partners did not presently or had never had a car, they often arrived somewhere with little familiarity of the area. Before they arrived at Our House, Freddie and Martha were given the option to stay at shelters in two "far-off towns." Recalling their drive to the shelter with their five kids, Martha explained:

They gave us two options – Riverside or Corona. So we went to Riverside. I don't know, sometimes in your mind you like don't know what to do and you're like scared. And I remember it was raining like this, and we were driving, it was pouring rain and it was cold. And at that time you started getting desperate. You didn't even care. So that's when we went to Riverside and we ended up at that place right there. Because Riverside was like really far. I'd never been out that far. Maybe driving through one time to my cousin's house when I was little, but that's about it. I think anything past Riverside is too far, so I didn't know anything around there. And I didn't know anybody.

During the researcher's time living in the shelter, one of the resident's cousin's seven year-old son was shot while playing in his front yard. Due to the location of the shelter, it took the resident two hours each way on the bus to get back to her neighborhood in Los Angeles. And due to shelter rules, she had to be back in the shelter each night by seven

p.m. As the young boy lay in the hospital, the resident, trapped nearly forty miles from her family and her life, complained, sharing with those of us sitting in the shelter living room that she had no business being at a shelter so far from her world.

A third emerging theme regarding the culture of homelessness relates to how the experience of homelessness changes one's conception of time. Ten of the sixteen research partners provided insights regarding how time itself changes, specifically regarding how much can be accomplished in a ninety-day emergency shelter program.

According to Lisette, during the first

month and a half and you're still kind of getting emotionally, getting your ducks in a row, and emotionally trying to figure out what you're going to do. And that leaves you like a month and a half to do it and sometimes, if it's one or two things, that's fine. But generally, if you're at the point where you're homeless, you've got a lot more things to get in order.

Lisa shared this experience and stated:

The main thrust to me that they should tell people from the very beginning and really emphasize it is that this is only ninety days. They do emphasize that it's only ninety days, but from day one it should be some type of plan toward housing ... I don't think the people that live there, because they're coming out of a bad situation into a better situation, I don't think they really realize the urgency on getting appointments, making time to go to these low-income apartment buildings to put in applications.

Anthony did, in fact, recall being told by his case manager not to "stand still."

Well [the case manager] told me, cause she was trying to help me, you know, time will just kind of like, seems like time was waste, time don't stand still, you know. There's a steady movement ... Well, I find that time, it seemed like it would just be farther and farther ahead of me. I remember [the case manager] saying that you know they help the residents as much as they can, but the resident has to do the footwork. And that's where I was kind of lagging. Like I said, had I have been a little bit more settled, you know, I just figured I'd be a little bit farther than what I am right now. But you know it might be God's will for me to be in this position at this point in time.

In contrast to the advice Anthony received from his case manager, Susan reported that her case manager told her “don’t worry about it cause the first month you’re there you just get yourself calmed down and relax and we’ll start the first of March trying to find you a place.” When I asked her if she was anxious during the first month about finding a place, her matter of fact response was “no,” although most research partners marveled at how quickly three months passes.

Because Crystal had a job and did not have significant debt, her main task was to find permanent stable housing. In comparing her situation with that of others in the shelter, Crystal stated:

[It’s especially hard] when you’re only there for a limited amount of time. You kind of have a time limit so you’re like I’ve gotta figure out what I’m going to do, where I’m going to go, you know, where’s my life heading. And I can imagine that’s harder for people who didn’t have, you know, a job like I did. And they were looking for work at that time and, if you don’t find something in three months, what are you going to do next.

I asked Art, who is still presently homeless, if there is anything that he wished he had during his experience at Our House, to which he responded “more time.”

Yeah more time, you know, it could have been a little bit more. Because I didn’t get a job until like the second month we were there, so I only had like one month worth of checks saved. You know, I didn’t have enough time.

My hypothesis is that the desire for more time is fueled by temporarily having shelter yet fearing its absence. I am unsure if the same conception of time is shared among people living literally on the streets. It would be interesting to see how a changed conception of time is present among those in transitional housing programs which, in general, are 120 days to one year or more, as well as those living on the streets. Finally, we will return to

the topic of time in the culture of homelessness when we explore what the research partners stated about being “broken” when they arrived at the shelter.

A fourth aspect of the culture of homelessness as reported by research partners is a sense of belonging or group cohesion. Following divorce and the loss of her job, Mary reported that she literally “had nothing” and, as her kids were in the custody of her mother, she left the county in which she’d spent her entire life and came to Our House. To use her words, she figured she would go to the shelter for a weekend, “go through the cooling off period and then probably come, pack my bags and come crawling back, you know with my tail tucked.” But what Mary found is that she soon felt as though she belonged at the shelter.

But I liked it. They put me in a program, you know, to help me get back to being employed. They got me talking back with my mom, you know, what I mean, solving all these issues, and anger management. They just they were there and it’s like I couldn’t leave then, you know what I mean, I was part of a program.

Mary explained how she came to feel camaraderie with the other residents and found comfort “because so many people have your same story.”

Crystal also experienced a sense of belonging.

In a situation where we’re all going through something it was kind of easy to open up more because they, you didn’t feel like, oh I’m the only person going through something ... the group of women that were there, although they had issues, at some point we would always feel like we were like sisters.

Briteny noted the family-like environment in the shelter, stating:

It was nice because we all ate at the same dinner table. The kids had a lot of kids to play with. And even though we did our chores, it was just good because we all had to work together. And it really helped my kids, you know, learn that family environment. So that was what I really got. I enjoyed being there.

According to Freddie, his sense of belonging developed into feelings of responsibility.

We were in the house, I want to say, 97% of the time even though we could have left during the weekend, we were here. You know we felt responsibility to keep the house in order. You know. So we stood there, we stood here because we really felt like it was our house.

His wife, Martha, expressed her concern that her sense of belonging was perhaps too great. According to Martha:

Sometimes I got too comfortable there in a way, like it was starting to be my comfort zone. It was just like another thing scared to leave. Another place and trying out. But everything turned out fine and today I learned to you know, I don't know, today we're doing okay.

We will return to this topic when we examine the support that residents reported to receive as the result of making friends in the shelter.

The final facet included in our examination of the culture of homelessness relates to the stigma of homelessness. Twelve of the sixteen research partners either shared their previous, uninformed beliefs about homelessness and shelter living, others' stigmatizing comments or actions toward the homeless, or their distancing from or shame related to the stigma. According to Susan, her first experience with homelessness was at age sixty and her only conception of homelessness was street living.

I had no idea that places like this [the shelter] existed. And if it hadn't been for my friend that I was staying with, I would never. Cause I, when I left [an emergency, one-night shelter] or was told to leave, I was planning on sleeping behind a CVS. Thinking maybe I would be safe there. I mean I had my big flash light in case somebody came I could whack them in the head with it or something ... Because you see, the only thing you've seen about homelessness is you this poor people out on skid row or whatever. We never talk about places like this.

Mary echoed this same sentiment stating, "But L.A. County, you talk about shelters people think like skid row, they don't even think like that [Our House]." Martha described her previous conceptions about shelter living.

I really show appreciation to places like this, you know, that help you. Especially having your kids together, your family, you know, because when I would hear like shelter I was thinking of a really scary, that word, it would just like frighten me ... it was scary.

Prior to her arrival at Our House, Martha and her family were staying at a church-run shelter in a neighboring city. She recalled how, with her husband and five children, she was told by one of the shelter staff that that particular shelter was not a place for children. LaToya expressed how shocked she was about the physical shelter environment, saying, "It was so clean in there! I was so amazed at how clean it was. I'm like wow this place is clean!" The shelter was also markedly different from what Crystal expected.

It was different than what I thought it was going to be because I thought it was going to be more like the kind you see in the movies. Or the ones that actually exist where everybody's kind of crowded, you have to be there at a certain time, see if you get in kind of thing. But then I realized, oh no, it's a different type of program ... I was worried because I didn't know who was going to be, like where we had all kinds of like drug addicts or things like that. And I was like well how's that going to work with my daughter ... I was just worried about that, or mental illness kinda, I was a little worried.

The previous comments demonstrate the changed understandings of homelessness reported by research partners as a result of their experience in the shelter.

Research partners also described the experiences they had coping with the stigmatizing beliefs and behaviors of others. Although Jennifer had her own preconceptions about the characters of homeless individuals, her personal experience resulted in a changed understanding. Yet, while she came to see the humanity in those she lived with, Jennifer recalled an experience in which she felt patronized by the staff of a transitional shelter during her application interview.

I called my mom and I'm like, "I'm not doing this anymore. Because I just got in this room with these women [transitional shelter staff] who think that this can't happen to them and they're so wrong. Just look at the

economy. I've worked so hard, made so much money, and I've done this and I've done that." And I'm like, "If they think that it can't happen to them, it can."

Martha felt stigmatized when she went to the local police station for assistance.

And then I went to the police station, you know, I'm only going to ask like if they had any, what's it called, motel vouchers. And he was asking me questions. And he was looking at me like I was using drugs. You know how they look at you. I said, "Look, I'm not doing drugs. I don't do drugs. I need it for my kids, you know." He was asking me, "Well does your husband work?" You know, kind of personal. To me cops are kind of jerks a lot of ways.

LaToya, who recently moved to California from the Midwest, never told her family and friends that she and her two daughters are currently homeless. They believe she's living in a rental unit with a shared kitchen and living area. LaToya explained her own stereotype of homelessness, which reflects her fear regarding sharing the intricacies of her circumstance with others.

Because, okay, so you think about homeless person, you're thinking about some nobody or somebody who did something to screw their life up, drugs whatever. I don't do drugs. I drink, but I drink socially. So like you think of somebody that just like made so many horrible decisions. And I know I made a few bad decisions, but I never made anything that should have put me in this situation. But I'm here, so it can happen to anyone.

After five years of homelessness, Wrakishia also felt stigmatized as a "street person."

One thing I don't like is when people talk about people that's on these streets. You don't know where you're going. You don't know where you're going to be at tomorrow. You can be, you can wake up and be gone, and then you will be the person that's laying right where these people are laying, getting talked about like you're doing them. You know that's one thing I don't too much care for ... You know where you been, but you don't know where you're going. Face it.

Yet, many of the research participants do not identify as "homeless" per se. When asked about her experience in the shelter, LaToya replied, "Another negative thing is just being a homeless person. Like I never really say that about myself, but just being that. That's

kind of negative to me.” LaToya developed this thought while sharing about her experience with the volunteers. She stated that along with other shelter residents she used to laugh and make jokes that they weren’t homeless enough to satisfy the volunteers.

They’re probably feeling like we gotta come bring some food to homeless people and they’re probably not, they’re not expecting, cause the group that I was with, we were most of us kept ourselves looking right. So it wasn’t like, we didn’t look like homeless people. So that’s why we would laugh. We would make jokes all the time about homelessness and we would say like we’re the most unhomeless homeless people we know. Because they, some people would bring food and we would like not eat. And it’s like, how are we not eating this food, you know, we’re supposed to be all like digging in.

Jennifer also distanced her identity and self-concept from the homeless stigma.

I know me. And I think what makes it the hardest is I think because I’m in this situation – it’s so embarrassing. Because I don’t belong here. I shouldn’t be here. You know and there has to be, there’s supposed to be something that I’m supposed to be learning. I know we go through things to teach us something and I don’t, I don’t think I want know. I just want to go back to work.

Because she had a job, did not receive welfare, and had never been homeless before,

Crystal too distanced herself from the homeless stigma in a unique way by not

considering herself deserving of shelter services. She considered her situation

“circumstantial” and stated:

I had benefits. Some of them didn’t have benefits. I didn’t even qualify for food stamps or cash aid, and all of them were on it. And it was just kind of like they would look at me like you don’t have that? What are you doing here then?

According to Mary, her lack of street smarts differentiates her from the “average homeless person.”

I don’t have the street smarts or whatever. I wasn’t a hustler. I don’t know how to roll up a backpack and go live under a bridge. I don’t know none of that. Usually in the homeless community that’s what there is – they know how to live.

Therefore, although their own stereotypes about homelessness were often dramatically changed, many research partners still did not identify as homeless. They experienced discrimination based on the stigmatization of homelessness, and were often entrenched in the culture of homelessness, but coped with such discrimination by distancing themselves from the label “homeless” and all that it entails.

Shelter Dynamics

For these research partners, the culture of their homeless experience is greatly informed by the dynamics of shelter living. Again, this topic in and of itself is worthy of a dissertation. Therefore, we must limit our attention to the following aspects: personality conflict in the shelter, rules, shelter privacy and safety, drug use in the shelter, and cultural differences. Foremost, research participants described various difficulties that accompany group living, but the single most influential factor relates to the difficulty dealing with the many personalities residing in the shelter at any given time. When asked about the most stressful aspect of living in the shelter, Martha responded, “I think people being rude in there and like ghetto. And acting kind of like mean. It was really stressful.” LaToya expressed similar feelings when she stated that one of the negative aspects of life in the shelter was

just some of the people I dealt with there. Horrible people ... I had a bad experience with one of the girls there. She was really irritating to me because she, I guess she felt like we were friends, and she was kind of jealous of me and another one of the residents, you know. So it was just a horrible experience. Me and her got into a lot of arguments and I learned just to ignore her ... I never considered her my friend because I knew I couldn't be around anyone like that.

Crystal also commented on how she experienced different residents living in the shelter during her tenure. She notes that while she was not directly involved in some of the conflict, it still had an impact on her daily living.

Maybe some of the people that were there – they had their own issues, which is understandable – but sometimes it was, they would just kind of get a little crazy. Pick fights maybe, but never with me, but just with other people. That kind of was bothersome, but I mean it’s going to happen when there’s so many people with different backgrounds and different mindsets at the time coming in one place ...

Crystal continued by noting how it became increasingly difficult to remain outside the conflict.

I think the people that were there they weren’t getting along and it was, I guess, harder for me because I got along with everybody really. So it was hard for me to watch them all kind of, not get along. And I’m like, “I don’t know what to tell you guys.” Because they kind of were like trying to get me to pick sides and I’m like, “I don’t pick sides. You all have your own point and I’m not going to get involved.” But that was happening a lot. It was always something. Like every few minutes there was something and I was just like oh God I can’t handle this.

Crystal ultimately chose to leave the shelter before her ninety days, due in part to her waning tolerance for personality conflict.

Conflict within the shelter was a frequent theme in individual counseling sessions as many residents needed a safe space to vent. The following is a case note excerpt from a counseling session with Jamie.¹²

Ct reported conflict that occurred in the shelter between Ct and the Resident Assistant (R.A.). Ct had confrontation with R.A. regarding her “curfew” on Thanksgiving. As a result of confrontation, Ct and R.A. continued to quarrel for a few days, and R.A. submitted a falsified written report about Ct’s chore performance. Ct reported that previously she had opened up to R.A. regarding her mother’s mental illness and her relationship with her estranged daughter. Following the confrontation R.A. made repeated disparaging comments about Ct’s life choices. Ct reported

¹² Ct means client.

that she “froze” herself to the comments, and then in 2 or 3 days she began to internalize them.

Jamie allowed herself to be vulnerable with the R.A., a fellow shelter resident. When conflict erupted related to her curfew, her sacred information was used against her in retaliation. Jessica also spoke with her counselor about the conflict in the shelter. The following is a case note excerpt:

Ct reported that she feels overwhelmed by the “drama” at the shelter. Ct reported that she thinks the negativity is too much for her and she says that she spends a lot of time in her room.

Lisette informed her counselor that the behavior of other residents was “juvenile” and Mary shared that she felt like an outsider.

Personality conflict in the shelter also impacts the group counseling process with sessions occasionally focusing on conflict mediation. Research partners commented on the need for more conflict mediation among the residents. Lisette recalled how she tried to utilize the group experience as a means of conflict mediation, but found that it only created more conflict.

[The counselor] was real good about it but not everybody, everyone wouldn’t be so open and honest. And if you did bring up something at the meeting that should be brought to the table and solved or resolved so you can go back, like I said, some of those conflicting personalities hold it against you and resent you for showing their ugliness, let’s say. And there would be a backlash. So it wouldn’t necessarily get better. It wouldn’t actually get resolved. It would have just been changed over to another phase or done differently. The manipulation or the ugliness would just shift in a different way.

Patricia noted that she found the group helped her to understand other residents better and that it may have lessened some of the shelter conflict.

The importance, the bottom line, because there’s so much animosity between the various adults back there, was to learn how to get along. [The counselor] had games. [The counselor] had tests. Personality tests and [the

counselor] broke it down for us all whether you were an introvert or you were an extrovert to show us that you're different from one another but you have to learn to get along. Okay. Because you have a safe haven and learn to appreciate that but by the same token you have to take everybody's situation into consideration before you snap.

Therefore, it seems that personality conflict in the shelter is, to a certain extent, unavoidable. However, research partners were able to share their frustration in individual counseling and, while the opportunity for conflict mediation is lacking, some residents' responses indicate they learned better coping skills through the group counseling experience.

Many of the research partners commented that much of the personality conflict relates to differences in parenting styles and to peoples' willingness to follow the rules and complete their chores. We will examine later on how homelessness and shelter living has an impact on parenting, but our attention here will be to the role of rules in the shelter. Freddie described the conflict he experienced with one resident while he was in the position of Resident Assistant (R.A.).

She didn't clean her doors. She didn't clean her walls. She didn't vacuum her room. And then she breaks down and starts crying. "He's being too hard. He's expecting more of me than my husband did" and da da da. The rules are for everybody, not just for certain sets of people here. You know, if everybody's going to abide by the rules, like come at eight o'clock at night knowing you're supposed to be here all weekend and then, you know, do this type of work. And then expect me to just – I'm not going to co-sign it. I don't co-sign my own BS, why am I going to co-sign yours?

Freddie repeatedly employed the term "co-sign" as a way of explaining how some residents enabled the poor choices of other residents by implicitly or explicitly condoning their behavior. Many research partners commented on how other residents frequently did not abide by the rules and do their chores. However, if Art is any example, others' rule-

breaking is often perceived as implicit permission for one's own rule-breaking. Art stated:

[The case managers] said that the rule's that the kids are supposed to be in the rooms by eight not – they don't have to be asleep – but they have to be in the room by eight. And then the adults, you know, TV off by eleven. You know, and then it's supposed to be quiet time to let people sleep. But usually there were a couple in the group, these females that liked to sit there on the couch and talk, and our door's right there. Sometimes they'll laugh loud or their phones will be ringing and they'll be talking loud on the phone, you know. So I got, if they're out there on the phone and not sleeping, then I got, well I told her, then I'm going to start watching TV at eleven o'clock then because I'm missing my show. The only show I like to watch, because I don't get to watch TV because kids get the TV until they go to bed. Then after eight o'clock if someone watches something, you know, it's shared TV. But I told them, you know, "I want to watch my show and it starts at eleven o'clock. And if you guys are up at eleven o'clock, what's the difference if I'm watching TV. Why should it bother you?" And they had a problem with that because that's the rule, ain't nobody allowed to watch TV after eleven o'clock and I'm like, "So. You're breaking the rule. What does it matter if I break the rule. I'm not going to tell on you if you don't tell on me, what's the difference? Then we'll all be happy." But they wouldn't go for that.

As a result, according to Art, the women called the case manager on the emergency phone at eleven p.m. to complain about his TV usage.

Mary also talked about the fluidity of the rules. Whereas she was previously drinking with other residents and not following all the rules, upon taking the position as R.A. Mary felt compelled not only to follow the rules but to enforce them.

I'm your equal and all of a sudden overnight I'm in a position where I'm not, and so it's like, "Hey, come and drink with us." And it's like, "No cause you can't come in here drunk, because I won't let you in." You know what I mean? So I had to deal with that. Because it was true - one weekend I was out there drinking at the park out there, Garfield Park or whatever, the next weekend I'm not letting girls in and I'm writing them up for coming in smelling like alcohol.

One can imagine how it might be difficult to respect an R.A. who, upon being endowed with power, begins writing you up for things she herself has done.

Jennifer and Lisa also expressed animosity about the rules, specifically relating to chores. Jennifer, who wasn't working but was required to be out of the shelter between nine a.m. and four p.m., expressed ill-will toward people who stayed away from the shelter for days at a time and thus did not complete their chores.

You have people in there who follow the rules and do the chores and stuff and those things seem like minimal. Like all you have to do is follow the rules and do the chores. But for somebody who's been outside from nine to four in the hot sun, they're like burnt out tired. And of course we're all human, we all get burnt out and tired. You just want to like go to sleep but you can't because you've got these chores to do. But there's people who don't do anything. And who leave for days at a time and the staff doesn't even know at all.

Therefore, while Jennifer feels completing chores is not an outlandish expectation, she is frustrated by the unfairness of some doing all the work and others doing nothing. Lisa made a similar remark, but voiced her frustration toward the "Jennifers" of the shelter – those who, unlike her, were not currently working.

Well to me the structure is set up for people that are not doing anything. That need motivation. The structure's not set up for those that are motivated already. Like I just find it ridiculous that I just came back from eight in the morning time, filling out applications, seeking this, I went to work, I was called for a little overtime after work, and then I have to come in and mop and cook for seventeen people. And you have women that are there that don't work, don't go to school, but they're treated as the same way as me, who just had a full day?

These comments illustrate that while the rules are never fair, they are often rarely followed. Yet even those who themselves don't follow the rules become quickly frustrated with the misbehavior of others.

Another aspect of the shelter dynamics relates to the limited privacy and safety of shelter living. Although each resident has a room with a door that shuts, many of the research partners commented that shelter living lacks privacy. For Jennifer, who

commented, “I’ve always been like more of a loner,” living in the shelter did not afford her the privacy she needed to feel like herself. Patricia simply stated, “I wasn’t accustomed to being around so many people at one time and under one roof.” Lisa also shared this feeling, stating:

You know, like even when it was down, you know, when I wanted to be by myself, they couldn’t stand me wanting to be by myself because they just couldn’t understand that. [Researcher: You might need some personal time] Some time to myself. If I went in my bedroom and took a nap or shut the door to read a book or look through a paper or something, “Oh what’s wrong with her? What’s wrong with her?” There was nothing wrong with me, but I tried to explain that I’m not used to being around that many people. When I come home I had a certain routine that I did. I’d been out of that routine for a while. “I’m not being a snob. I don’t think I’m better than you.”

For LaToya, the lack of privacy related to concerns about her own safety and the security of her belongings. Although residents have separate rooms, there are no locks on the doors. For many residents, this created feelings of insecurity. LaToya commented:

We don’t have locks on our doors. That was hard to get used to. Anyone could just come in and open your door and, you know, there’s a lot of kids so they don’t think to knock. So, you know, there’s no privacy. No privacy. Having to think about maybe, because everyone has a different laundry days and they get to be there all day on their laundry day, having to think about, I wonder if this person is going through my room, you know, going through my stuff.

A number of the research partners did experience theft. For some it was something somewhat insignificant like cough drops, but for others it was money. Because Jamie worked retail and would often not return to the shelter until ten or eleven in the evening, the lack of locks on the doors “heightened [her] level of distrust of people.” In addition to the theft of some of clothing items, Jamie recalled when

one day I came home and came back to there and found that my suitcase had been opened. Actually someone had torn, torn it when they tried to open it even though I had a lock on it. It was just a little roller suitcase.

But what they did was, I don't know how they got in it, but they tore the lining, the material part of it so that they could get in it.

Without locks on the doors, some research partners also expressed concern for their physical safety. Two research partners described incidents of knives being pulled on other residents. And Lisa shared that upon moving out, Wrakishia left Lisa her knife for protection.

When Kishia moved out she gave the butcher knife to me from out of her bear and I said, "Well that's not good." She was like, "Shoot. If somebody would have came in on us." ... I was like, it was just funny. You know, it was sad.

Drug use in the shelter also caused some residents to feel insecure and unsafe. While one might hope it were an exaggeration, according to Mary "everybody" in the shelter was using. Freddie commented that the most stressful aspect of shelter living was "people on drugs." Commenting on the way drugs impacted his shelter stay, he stated:

People doing things, crazy things. People sneaking out because they were high chasing the drugs. People going crazy in there because they're on drugs, dealing, doing all this crazy stuff over drugs. I think without the drugs being an issue, I think things would have ran way smoother with the people. Even the people that weren't on drugs they would still co-sign the people that were on drugs BS. You know what I mean, like back them up, let them sneak in.

Jennifer observed similar dynamics and stated that one of the residents used to sneak out of her bedroom, leaving her daughter in the room sleeping, and return later that evening high. She also recalled a separate incident with another resident who returned to the shelter drunk. According to Jennifer:

She started coming in around eleven or twelve at night. I opened the door for her at 10:30 or something. She was so drunk. I mean she's like, "Hooo, I'm sorry. I should have washed the dishes." Because she had them at night and I had them in the morning. And I'm like "Okay." She's like, "I'm not going to leave you hanging." She's so drunk off of her mind I'm like, "Okay." So a couple minutes later she's in the room with her son and,

I don't know if she's beating him or if she was just like yelling at him, it was just like oh my God. So I wake up in the morning and she didn't do the dishes and I had all of the dishes on top of whatever they used for breakfast ... And she does that like almost two or three times a week.

Yet, despite their many accounts of drug use, only one research partner was willing to admit that she participated in using drugs during her tenure in the shelter.

Finally, research partners offered insight regarding how cultural differences impact shelter dynamics. Further insight into the definition and nuances of culture will be explored in Chapter 4; for now it is important to note that cultural differences are not limited to race and ethnicity, but include class, religion, gender, age, sexual orientation, etc. First, according to Jamie, race “was not really a big issue. And I don't know if that's because California, you know they say California's a melting pot. And you know pretty much everybody has lived with a variety of races. You know it's been multicultural.”

However, Jamie experienced difference due to her age and her socioeconomic background. Jamie commented that she didn't have “much in common ... obvious I was there, I was homeless myself, but I just didn't have the same ideals and concepts as some of the others that were in the shelter.” She attributes this difference to the fact that she is older, she did not have children in the shelter, and she was raised in a middle class, African-American culture. Susan, also a single woman in her sixties and without any children in the shelter, shared the following reflections about racial culture. In her intake counseling session, Susan described herself as a “spoiled middle class white woman” and, during the researcher's participant observation, she stated that “WASPy women don't expect to be homeless.” Susan recalled a discussion during group counseling about “how hard it is to be black, which I'm sure it is.” She continued by sharing her

experience trying to get a fellow African American resident an appointment with her own case manager, and wandering around the mall when they had extra time to spare.

There was time so I said, “Well, let’s go over to the mall and wander around.” So here’s Keona and Kyla and Sue walking around and I kept, I noticed people would, not all the people, but every once in a while we’d get this strange look. And then when we went to lunch in the park with Bea, Keona and I had to go to the bathroom and we said, and I said some smart alec thing like, “Come on, you know I’ll let you go to the bathroom, come on.” And she goes, “Oh thank you missa, oh thank you!” And there were some people there that were like, I said well, “I only let her out once in a while.” And then they realized we were joking, but, you know, see I could do that with Keona.

Although she was not a research partner as she failed to show for her interview, Keona told the researcher during her shelter stay that only white people can like Life cereal because black folk don’t like life.

Freddie, a Mexican American, also noted how his background impacted racial dynamics in the shelter.

My background was, because I was from the streets of El Monte, I was gang affiliated over there with that uh you never get along with the black people. However, I decided a long time ago that was a bunch of bull because the ones that burglarized my house were my friends. The ones that tried to tell my girlfriend at the time that I was cheating on her were my friends, supposedly my homeboys. The ones that tried to get me hooked on heroine, hooked on crack, and in the end, you know, set me up okay, hey, you’re going to be the drive while we burglarize this - no thank you. You know. They were all the ones trying to mislead me. The ones that would help me pick up my kids in Whittier were a black guy that I knew from drugs. He had offered, “Hey,” you know, “how come you don’t have your kids this weekend?” “Well I don’t got a ride.” “Well I’ll give you a ride.” Never no strings attached ... All the whole time we’ve been homeless all the people that have always helped us have all been black people you know. And the people we’re living with now are black.

Mary had a shared street culture with other shelter residents which helped her to transcend other cultural differences. Mary made the following comment about the former resident assistant:

He was like from the hood like me, you know what I mean. Like he had just got out of prison for a murder charge or something, so I could relate to him. And I guess because of the different ethnic groups it was comfortable like that. If I would have went in and it was like all white or all black I probably would have felt very out of my, how do you say, out of my realm. So I felt very comfortable.

Participant observation also allowed the researcher to witness first-hand some of the shelter's racial dynamics. In contrast to the serious, scholastic discourse that accompanies issues of race in academia, the researcher observed frequent candid, humorous comments about racial difference. Similar to the remark above about Life cereal, the residents teased Susan, saying that "nobody likes white girl mac 'n cheese," and that when they have their barbecue she will be asked to bring something else. Another interchange occurred between two African-American residents in response to a movie that was playing about a woman who wanted to be a rapper but whose brother was stealing and selling her lyrics. One resident queried why every black movie has the same themes – "I lost my daddy, my family was killed, all these horrible things happened but I'm going to survive." She said if it was a white girl movie the girl would be in her room alone and cutting herself. The other resident was growing quickly upset about the racial commentary and defended the movie, stating movies like that "remind people of what they can do." While it is interesting to note the contradicting interpretations of the film, the more important point is that such culturally explicit and deconstructive conversations are a common aspect of shelter dynamics.

An additional cultural dynamic within the shelter relates to gender balance. As this shelter does not allow single male residents unless they are accompanied by children, there are often many more women than men living in the shelter. Crystal, who we heard

developed a sister-like relationship with the women in the shelter, made the following comment about the different shelter dynamics when men were present:

And when the men were there it was actually pretty cool too. They had, you know, a different little balance there. You know, they'd have their little witty remarks and stuff. It was always fun to go back and forth with them ... [but] it was a totally different atmosphere. Like I noticed when the men were there the TV was always on and you know there was always some sort of sport on. And all the women were like, "Oh God, here we go, we don't want to watch this." And then when it was women, the TV was usually off and the radio was blasting and we were all dancing around the place and cooking and chatting, and it was totally different atmosphere.

The male research partners had a different experience related to gender balance.

According to Freddie:

I was the only guy in there so the girls were always trying to, I always went in there with a good mood and they were always trying to get me off my good mood. And I'd be like, oh, I wouldn't do it. Sometimes they would, they'd team up against me, but I could handle it.

Art had the same experience of feeling ganged up on by the women.

For a while I was the only male there so all the women, I felt like they would gang up on me. So I was like going to protect myself. Not violence. But you know I was going to speak up. And then finally after a while another guy came so at least I had a little more, you know it was different, when it was two men there.

According to Anthony, he thought there would be more male residents in the shelter, but determined that he "still got adjusted to it quickly. It was okay."

In addition to commenting on the cultural differences and dynamics within the shelter, research partners also described the intercultural relationships with staff and counselors. Although one research partner commented on the comfort she took in talking with the case manager as they both were raised in the Midwest, most research partners noted conflicting intercultural relationships. During his brief position as R.A., Freddie

attempted to share with the case manager his assessment of a fellow resident and her behavior in the shelter.

[The case manager] tells me one day, “I went to college.” She goes, “Don’t you think I know how to read people?” And I go, “Well I don’t know what book you read but you’re not reading this situation right because you know I go if anyone is going to lie to you it’s not going to be me,” I put it like that.

Freddie experienced cultural distancing as the case manager used her educational achievements to cement the hierarchy already inherent in their relationship. Cultural distance was also apparent in research partners’ relationships with one of the shelter counselors. Susan shared a story in which another resident, in completing a letter writing assignment in group counseling, stated “I don’t like the f-ing bus.” Perhaps because English is not her first language, or possibly other cultural differences, the counselor was unaware of the meaning of “f-ing,” and her query was responded to with a chorus of residents responding “fucking” over and over again. Crystal also commented on possible language barriers when she stated:

I think they just had a hard time I think because of her accent, mostly her accent. I think it was harder for her to, it was probably okay for her to say it because she knew what she was saying, but it was harder for everybody else to kind of understand what she was trying to say. And then I would try to like, “Well I think she’s saying this.” I’m like, “Is that what you’re saying?” And then she’d be like, “Yeah.” You know, like okay, so I think that was, but a lot of it I think had to do with people you know closing off too. They tended to do that when they didn’t want to be there.

LaToya reflected on her own experience “closing off” and feeling disconnected from one of the shelter counselors. LaToya stated:

I mean I think the counseling is good to have because you do need someone to talk to, but just me and her wasn’t clicking together. I felt like she didn’t understand and I still feel like that in groups, that’s why I just kind of smile when I’m in the group with her because it’s like I say something to her and she’s just like this, she’s just staring at me, and I’m

done, you know. I'm done talking and I don't know what is going on in the mind at the time, but that's exactly how it was when we were talking ... that's why I told [the case manager] I said, "[I] can't do it anymore. Like I think I need to, I would like to see someone on a weekly basis but I just can't do it with her."

Yet, even with the many cultural differences, research partners still reported feeling significant support from both shelter staff and counselors, which will be examined more below.

Residents' Self-Reported Psychological Status

Research partners spoke about various aspects of their emotional and mental health during their homeless experiences. They talked about being "broken" upon arrival at the shelter and feelings of depression. They reflected on the need to be honest with themselves about why and how they came to be homeless. They observed how some residents don't own up to their own role and recognize that "nobody can do it for you." In this section, we will explore the following five areas of research partners' self-reported psychological processes and status: being down, having the motivation to overcome, getting up, the psychological adjustments that help one to cope, and the impact of homelessness on one's identity.

First, research partners shared extensively about feeling down. They experienced "brokenness" and depression, feelings of powerlessness and shame, and frequently felt they were not being treated as "human." As the first partner to interview, Lisette used the term "broken" to describe how she felt upon arriving at the shelter. She stated:

One part of you is happy because, like I came from a car situation, and I had my son back so now I was happy in a way. But so I was grateful and happy in that way because – oh good, I've got a roof over my head, I know where I'm going to sleep tonight. But it's also, okay, now you still have that baggage from where you just came from so you have to get rid of all that like the emotions that okay now where am I going to go from

here? How am I going to do this? Okay, I gotta do everything I can. I gotta apply for aid. I'm going to get aid now. I gotta get him [her son] enrolled with the doctor and get these things done for myself. If you don't have a vehicle you gotta look for bus routes and everything to get certain places. It makes it worse. If you do have a vehicle, you're great except sometimes you don't have the gas, or sometimes my tire's low, it's flat, just things like that. You know, life basically hands you problems sometimes.

Lisette describes the mixed emotions that accompany entrance into the shelter. While she did experience a sense of relief, she also was forced to confront some of her past “baggage” and present anxieties. Jamie described her own experience of feeling broken when she said “I felt like I had fallen.” Mary also shared this sentiment. She stated:

I got to a point in my life where I went through a divorce, I had just lost custody of my kids, I was angry with my world, you know. I didn't want to see my friends. I didn't want to see my family. So I had lost my house and my car, everything in my divorce. I lost my job – I worked at Arrowhead Hospital for three years – so I lost everything. I was so mad because, you know, I was helpless.

Being “broken” has to do with the loss of relationships, the loss of material possessions, and a profound sense that you've fallen from your prior position where you could function and cope. As Patricia says, “it was sincerely overwhelming” to sit with her feelings upon entering the shelter.

The research partners' feelings of brokenness also include significant feelings of depression. For example, Briteny arrived at the shelter both broken and depressed. She recalled, “I remember when I was in Our House and I was all crying on the floor. I was just in my room by myself and I was like, I was just, you know how you get – you're hurt and you just cry out.” During their intake interviews, seven of the sixteen research partners noted past episodes of depression. During the interview process, many research partners also described how feelings of depression contributed to their homelessness.

Lisa's niece was killed by a drunk driver, which caused Lisa to question her own existence and behaviors.

She was killed by a drunk driver and it, I think it hit me as bad as the death of a child of my own. And I felt like why am I, why am I struggling so hard when life can be taken from you so quickly. You know, so I just felt like, you know, I think I just got caught in that thought – you know, why keep on struggling when actually the next few minutes aren't even promised to us no matter how hard we try. And I think I maybe should have went and got some help early on instead of really just walking around in a fog.

So Lisa stopped working two jobs, seven days a week, and eventually was evicted.

According to Patricia, she first became depressed during high school as she attempted to cope with the dysfunction of her family. But following her divorce in middle age she began feeling suicidal. She shared the following story about what kept her going while she was homeless and suicidal:

I remember when I first left [my husband] and I was writing actually a suicide note, apologizing to them not being strong enough to withstand being away from them. Shay Shay could have been about nine, maybe ten, yeah nine, and the phone rings. And she says, "Grammy, how are you?" And I started crying, but I didn't want to let her hear me cry, and so I said, "Oh, I'm fine. I got a little cold. That's why my nose is running." She says, "I just want to tell you I'm sorry." "For what sweetie?" "You are just so special and I don't think I told you enough."

Small tears began to form in Patricia's eyes as she recalled the depth of her depression and the small voice that helped to keep her in the world.

As we heard earlier, prior to her entry to Our House, Jennifer ended her relationship while experiencing postpartum depression. She remembers feeling trapped by her depression and stated, "I know at the time I couldn't control the postpartum depression. I knew there was something wrong with me, but I couldn't snap out of it even though like something inside me was like this is not you, this is not you." Lisette also

experienced depression related to her relationship and pregnancy. She noted that her depression stemmed from “finding myself pregnant at 43 with some guy that was just a boy toy and that’s not going to go anywhere.” But when the relationship ended and he stopped wanting to “play house,” Lisette said, “Now it was like depressed because now his friendship was gone.”

LaToya’s feelings of depression actually improved upon moving into the shelter. Whereas she was frequently crying while moving from motel to motel, the shelter allowed LaToya to take control and recognize the progress she was making.

When I first came here, before I came here when I was living in the motels, I used to like be so sad and depressed and just always being like there’s something I need to do. You know, I just couldn’t relax. I couldn’t. I was so stressed and everything was going through my mind. I used to cry. But when I came here I noticed that I wasn’t crying. I’m like what is wrong? I feel kind of bad because I’m not crying when I’m in this, supposed to be horrible situation, but I’m really not cause I know that I’m doing something to get to the next step.

LaToya’s experience foreshadows our inquiry into how the research partners were able to cultivate the motivation and initiative to overcome their circumstance.

In addition to feeling broken and depressed, research partners also expressed feelings of powerlessness and shame related to systemic as well as personal factors. Research partners explained how they had no authority over their own schedules, were often left waiting for the shelter transportation following parenting classes, and suffered an increased dependency on others. For Patricia, this dependency on others was “frightening.”

It was frightening. You come from being a complete, total independent individual and then you have to depend on others for food and warmth and it was something I wasn’t accustomed to ... I’ve always been self-sufficient. Always had my own thing, my own roof, my own bank account, my own transportation.

When asked what type of care she would offer to another homeless person, LaToya also spoke about the powerlessness that accompanies dependence.

I would make them feel at home ... I would just try to do whatever I can to make them not feel like they need me, because I don't want them to feel like they need me. You know what I'm saying? Because if they feel like that they're going to feel uncomfortable ... I just don't want them to feel like, you know, like they're a charity case.

Such feelings of dependence and powerlessness are likely to result in shame. Jennifer commented on this when she described her experience with shelter staff.

They talk to you like you're homeless. Like you need us. And we do need them. I think I was really frustrated one day and I was like I can't find a job. I need work. I need a job. This is unacceptable. And [my mom] was just like telling me to be patient and I was like I don't know if I can handle people looking down on me like this. I mean I know I used to look down on people like this, but for anyone to think they're immune to this is outrageous because it just is.

Jennifer's comment is an initial look into how the research partners often felt they were not treated with dignity. But her dependence on the staff resulted in a profound sense of shame. Jennifer also noted that her extended family is not aware that she is homeless because her mother is embarrassed.

LaToya also has not shared with her friends and family her homeless status.

People I know don't know I'm in this situation ... If they do know, they don't know it's a homeless shelter. They just know it's a place where it's more than one family living and we gotta share kind of. I don't really just because I don't want people to feel sorry for me. I don't want to make them feel uncomfortable.

LaToya also felt ashamed when the workers from her child's pre-school showed up at the shelter on a Sunday evening to provide a meal for the residents. Upon returning to the shelter that evening, she

started seeing familiar faces and I'm like, oh God. And it kind of like dawned on me. I'm in this fucking – oh sorry – I'm in this shelter and I'm like, I just went in my room and I started crying. And I'm like damn. I don't even want to go back out there. But, you know, I don't want to be rude because they brought food and they were playing like little games with the kids. So I'm like damn ... I was kind of ashamed. And shocked ... I was really ashamed because they see me everyday and they didn't know I was in this situation. They didn't even know I was close to this situation.

Related to feelings of shame and powerlessness, numerous research partners commented that they did not feel treated with respect. Briteny, who had the same job throughout three years of homelessness, reported that the most challenging aspect of her experience was the way she was treated by others. She stated:

One particular shelter I felt when you walk in the room they were kind of like, kind of look down on you, or feel that you know, because they would only give services to certain people, or certain people were regarded with certain things, and that was really difficult ... Like I might as well go backwards than go forwards cause of this, you know. But luckily I have faith, so I just keep moving, kept moving. But it was really hard. To me I felt like, you know, we might have been in a shelter or whatever the case is, I still work, I still pay taxes, just like you do. It doesn't make me any different just because your job is to help me find resources to keep going, doesn't make me any lesser of a person than you.

Lisa mentioned how staff members at times “took the snob attitude ... instead of compassion.” LaToya felt similarly, stating that the staff could “show a little bit more concern for our needs.” She stated that one staff member “treats us sometimes like we’re just like nothing.” Susan even noted how she felt dehumanized by certain volunteers.

One time when that group came that they were so, I don't know, I know there's a difference between the word condescending and patronizing, but I'm not sure what it is. Anyway, they brought in like their whole family and they sat at one table and chit-chatted among themselves ... which doesn't make any sense to me because they're supposed to be so helpful and friendly.

In contrast, research partners also noted times when they felt they were treated with kindness and caring. Talking about her experience with the volunteers, Mary stated:

They did it not because they had to – it wasn't like a class they had to go to – they did it cause they wanted to. For us it was a treat you know what I mean cause they brought, you know when you're there they've got like a menu, if it's steak, you eat steak. But they would bring like chips and soda and stuff. You know, it was a treat ... So it was really nice. It made you feel human, you know what I mean? It's not like skid row.

Later we will turn to examine in more detail how residents experienced the pastoral care offered by volunteers, but it is important to note how one volunteer in particular helped the residents to feel “human.” Earlier we heard Jennifer's experience with shelter staff and the shame which resulted; however, she also noted how, in contrast to the shelter staff, one of the volunteers treated the residents like equals. In an attempt to distinguish what this treatment looked like and felt like, Jennifer explained:

It's like how she talks to us cause, you know how when you have a job, and you have a boss, and the boss has a certain like stance that I am the boss. I have the title, like I'm on that level, and you're not. It's similar to that and [the volunteer] was just like regular. Because I think like you could be a boss and you could be on a higher level and still be decent with people. Don't treat people like this. Like they have the potential to do what you're doing. Show them what you're doing. Have, make them on your level. If you're better, then show them you know ... Even people who didn't deserve it, it wasn't like, [the volunteer] didn't say like no you don't deserve this. She took everybody. We were all equal. It was cool.

In light of feelings of brokenness and depression, powerlessness and shame, research partners were able, in many ways, to transcend “being down” through motivation and initiative. According to the research partners, in order to have the motivation to work to change your situation you first must be honest with yourself. The second area of our inquiry into the self-reported psychology of the research partners relates to having the motivation and initiative to overcome. With their backgrounds in

Narcotics and Alcoholics Anonymous, Freddie and Martha initially educated the researcher on the need for “being honest with yourself.” By being honest with themselves about how their behaviors, including drug use and multiple arrests, contributed to their homelessness, they were more motivated to transcend their homeless circumstance. As we heard earlier, Freddie had already accepted the consequences of his drug use, and noted that such honesty with himself allowed him to maintain a good attitude. When asked what type of care he would provide for someone experiencing homelessness, Freddie responded saying “I would expect them to be honest with how they got homeless.”

According to Patricia, counseling can help individuals to be honest with themselves. She said, “I think [counseling] should be a requirement just like it was here. Because how are you going to not repeat the same thing if you don’t open yourself up to why that’s something that everybody could benefit from as to why.” Like Freddie, she also said that she would only provide assistance to homeless persons if they were ready to be honest with themselves. In commenting on this, Patricia stated, “So are you really ready to make a change is what I would first ask them. And, if so, I can help you.” Research partners discussed not only the need to be honest with oneself, but the ways in which they had to do just that. After sending her children to live with her oldest son in the Midwest, Lisa could have continued to live off the generosity of her friends. She could have avoided bringing herself and her children to the shelter. But Lisa had to be honest with herself about her goals and what she needed to achieve them.

They [her friends] wanted me to stay there with them. You know, if anything, “Okay we’ll scoot over and we’ll make space for you. Stay with us.” But I have a family. I had things in storage, you know. Laughing and joking with them is one thing, but I was on a much seriouser mission. So

then when I suddenly realized there was no hope of getting an apartment – I didn't have a job – I had to go.

Susan got honest with herself when she stated, “Eventually I’m going to get myself out of this mess, cause I got myself into it so I’ll figure out how to get out of it.” When the researcher asked her what she had done to get herself in the mess, Susan responded, “When I was working five days a week I was spending money instead of saving most of it.” For Jennifer, finding herself in a shelter was a “reality check.” She stated:

It was actually a reality check because once I kind of just put my stuff away and, in the room I realized that I was in a homeless shelter with my children, and that I was like 30 years old and look at what I had to show for it. And whatever postpartum depression I was going through I snapped right out of it because it was more of a reality check. Like look at what I’ve done to myself, you know.

Research partners also noted that people who are not willing to be honest with themselves often feel entitled to services and resources. Lisette commented on this when she stated, “Yeah, they take things for granted and they don’t, they’re not stepping back and looking at the whole picture. They’re just looking at the right here and now. And it’s like you know, this is the program and if you don’t like it you can leave.” Jamie referred to such people as “sponges” and felt manipulated when she was asked to loan them things such as money or her cell phone. Jennifer commented on the entitled attitude of a fellow shelter resident when she stated:

She’s like, “I only have a week left or something and LAHSA¹³ needs to find me a place, and they told me to call my numbers and that’s not my job, that’s their job.” And I’m like wow. Or when they would bring the food in the evening the college, one of the girls said, “We’re having that shit again” and the lady who just delivered it hadn’t even left the building and turned around like ???

¹³ LAHSA is an acronym for Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority. Established in 1993, LAHSA is an independent agency managing Federal, State, County, and City funding for Los Angeles City and County shelters, homeless services programs, and homeless individuals and families. Homeless individuals and families are assigned a case manager who assists them in securing shelter as well as permanent housing.

In light of such experiences with other shelter residents, when the researcher asked Jennifer how she would care for someone experiencing homelessness, she replied:

You know what, that's so hard because, I mean, being in the shelter I felt like I was, I care about my life and I care about being motivated and being proactive in my own life. But I also saw people there who were like well, they need to do this for me, they need to do that for me. Took advantage and didn't take the initiative at all ... So for somebody like me, who was motivated to make any kind of changes what would I do? I don't know because you hand people stuff and they just want more. And, you know, no respect and stuff. Usually when they have to tough it out it's when they have to buck up and handle it.

Lisa, who worked a similar job at a local school district as another shelter resident, commented on how this resident was not willing to be honest with herself.

She worked the same amount of hours for me with the school district that I worked. I knew exactly what she got paid, and then she had the benefit of welfare. Then she had the benefit of food stamps. Then she had the benefit of boyfriends. And the only time she wanted to be around the shelter is when she was getting something. She didn't want to do her chores. She was rarely ever there. And when she was there it was a big scene to show she was there.

Research participants also noted how difficult it is to have the motivation necessary to transcend homelessness. In thinking about the greatest challenge of homelessness, Mary explained it as “just having the motivation I guess to go back, to get your job, to get your car, to get your house, everything you lost.” But, as Lisette said, “nobody can do it for you,” which makes cultivating and maintaining motivation even more important. Briteny talked about how, although she would want to give “encouraging words” to people experiencing homelessness, the motivation has to come from within.

No matter how much you say to a person, no matter how many, how much you buy, you know what I mean, if you say let me give you this, and this, and this, no matter what, they're not going to change inside. They have to want to do that for themselves.

Lisa employed a striking analogy regarding the need for motivation. She reflected, “I think the thing the shelter did was help us plant seeds. How you watered, how you cared for your garden, was up to you.” Wrakishia stated simply, “You have to do it on your own. You have to. But like I said, Our House allowed you to motivate yourself to do that.”

The above reflections help to illustrate how being honest with oneself and cultivating motivation for change aid one in coping and overcoming homelessness. But research partners also explained what helped them to “get up” after “being down.” The third area of inquiry into the research partners’ self-reported psychology relates to getting up. For some research partners, humor was a valuable coping mechanism as they tried to get up. According to Jamie, “Humor sometimes is used to, to overcome some of your woes, so I thought some of them [other residents] were funny and lighthearted and delightful.” Patricia also used humor to help her “get up.”

Comedy for me is not just a healing property, it’s a self-defense mechanism. You know what I mean? Because with my growing up I had to make fun of everything in order not to take it as serious as it should have been, but I learned to laugh a lot. You know, not to cover it up so much, but to not take it so seriously.

Mary, who at the time of the interview was living in a tent, coped with her situation by making light. She joked, “So it’s like I was telling him [her boyfriend]. I’m like Laura – like Little House on the Prairie – I get up in the morning and I’m like hello, I’m little Laura!” By reframing her circumstance Mary is able to deal with the scorpions, the gunshots, and the lack of electricity and running water that accompanies tent living.

Research partners also described how they culled hope as a means of helping to “get up.” Whether through the consistency of a job, faith in God, or belief in oneself,

research partners noted how hope helped them to persevere. Jamie's job at a local department store gave her hope and reminded her of a brighter future. Jamie reflected, "You know the job is what was kind of like a salvation for me. You know, other than God. It gave me something to do during the day. It gave me hope you know that I would be able to overcome this." Briteny managed to maintain the same job throughout three years of homelessness. She simply stated, "My job is my happiness. It's my break away from the kids ... It's just my stability." By staying at the same job Briteny did not make the money she could at another company, but received more than just a paycheck.

I don't want to leave because I'm grounded there. I'm comfortable. But yeah, through all my, even with like the things having to do with my children's father, my job was my peace. My job's my home away from home. I mean literally my job was my everything. I didn't care. It takes two hours on the bus to get to work and I don't care. I'm still there everyday.

Briteny and Jamie experienced the stability necessary to persevere by maintaining employment.

For Art, as well as many other shelter residents, faith in God fosters hope and perseverance. When asked how he sustained himself throughout his homeless experience,

Art responded:

Just believing, trusting, and believing that through all things He'll make a way. You know, don't be, even this, even this life, I look at situations, you know, it's no condition that a person can be in or experience that the Bible can't help them. Cause for every condition there's always a scripture in that Bible.

Freddie also maintained hope by keeping faith.

It was almost like God was saying okay, this is going to work here and this is going to work there. Because the way things have happened, even though it was rough, we've always felt like, you know, God's hand in our situation ... I think a lot of it just had to do with my belief in God and just

knowing that there's something out there for me that I have to, you know, that I have to reach.

For Lisa, her experience with homelessness “actually cheered [her] up faithwise.” Lisa’s faith allowed her to assert some control over her “spiraling” life.

I was stuck on stupid for a long time. But overall it was hard for me to find something to laugh about when I got there, because it was, it was like my life was spiraling. And then somehow I had to find a way to put the brakes on without causing damage. I had to call it to a stop ... And I credit that to my faith in God.

When asked how she was able to sustain herself during her experience of being homeless, Jamie credited her success to God.

I would have to say God ... My religious upbringing and the fact that my family has been there. You know, of course you know, my family has been there, my sister, and their religious convictions ... It was my faith I guess ... It was my faith and my desire to overcome a lot of my weaknesses.

Like Jamie, Anthony also credits God with his ability to sustain himself and his five children during their experience of homelessness. Numerous times throughout his interview Anthony noted that God will make a way for him. He expounded on how he was able to keep on keeping on by stating:

It was God. Just knowing that God will provide. You know. Just praying and asking him to, you know, to help me. He was always there. You know, they say well He’s never late. He’s always on time. You’ll just have to have patience. You know, because I had experience on both hands of being obedient to the Word and being in a time of need and [he snaps] it’s right, it’s just instant ... I believe in Him.

In addition to finding faith in God, other research partners shared how hope in oneself is a necessary component in order to “get up.” For Crystal, continuing to believe in herself was a stressful part of her homeless experience. She stated, “Just telling myself that I could do it too. Like having to constantly remind myself of what I was doing, what

I was working for and that I could do it. That was probably the other stressful thing.”

Furthermore, hope is cultivated when others remind you to believe in yourself. While we will explore the types of support residents received in a subsequent section, for now it is important to note that when asked, many partners stated that they would help others experiencing homelessness by reminding them not to give up. LaToya said she would offer help to someone by “just basically telling them don’t give up. It’s not the end of the world. Keep ‘em you know motivated to just keep going and don’t get stressed out. It’s just life and stuff happens.” In reflecting on the type of care she would provide, Martha also stressed not giving up.

One thing is that don’t ever give up. You know, people that go to here, there, and yeah it’s tiring. Don’t give up. Just pray and, you know, relax. And those times are stressful, but as long as you have faith He’s going to take care of you. There’s times when you’re in trouble but everything is going to be okay.

Briteny commented, “I just keep telling them you’ll make it through. Just keep pushing and pushing. I know it seems like it’s going to take forever but you know you’ll pull through. Just don’t give up.” The above comments illustrate how the hope to persevere can be facilitated by outside sources such as God, staff, friends, etc. We will later explore how research partners reported receiving support from such sources which really helps one to “get up.”

The fourth psychological concept presented by research partners is the psychological adjustment that is essential in order to cope with the homeless experience. Many research partners explained how they reframed their experiences in an effort to adjust and, for many, the ability to reframe toward adjustment resulted in growth. Mary stated simply, “When we’re in a shelter we’re not going because we want to go. We’re

going because God's making us. But once we go there it clicks. You know it starts sinking in and then what happens is you start healing or whatever." No one wants to be homeless. But, as Mary's comment indicates, once you are, if you can reframe your experience toward adjustment then you are more likely to "start healing or whatever." Martha called this "growth basically within yourself." As we will later explore, Martha learned a number of new life skills during her shelter experience. She learned "responsibilities, being neat and all that stuff" and how to cook. It also helped to strengthen her marriage. She reflected, "I really felt like my husband and I, after all this I felt like we grew more like strength within ourselves, marriage, and, don't get me wrong, we argued over stress or whatever. But you learn to overcome a lot of things. A lot."

Briteny entered homelessness as an escape from domestic violence. After three years of homelessness, Briteny was able to look back and recognize the many adjustments she made to cope with her circumstance.

Actually it feels good to know, I didn't even realize like I really came a long way from when I was at Inland Valley. It's crazy. I mean I was still like, you know, I'm not happy with my kids' dad, but maybe one day we'll make it work. Or no I'm done. You know, I would from there to this is so hard all by myself with the kids, you know, no, I'm worth it. My confidence level didn't go up until, like when I left [another transitional shelter] so maybe like fully two years ago. It took me that long to really say, "You know what Briteny, you're beautiful and you can get any guy in the world. What are you worrying about this guy who doesn't care about the kids and this and this and that." And then once my confidence level went up I actually met a guy.

She reframed her experience as a means of coping with all the life changes and was able to increase her confidence to recognize her own self-worth. Crystal, who was also leaving a relationship, adjusted quickly to homelessness in an effort to engage in the self-growth she knew she needed. When asked what her experience at the shelter was like she replied,

“Um surprising. I actually liked it. It’s weird to say being in that situation but that was probably the best thing that’s happened to me in a long time.” Crystal was able to grow in myriad ways following her adjustment to the homeless circumstance.

I think it was really good actually. I kind of learned that I was a little bit of a perfectionist. I need to stop that. I kind of realized that people, I mean I knew that they had faults, but it used to bother me to the point that I was like I don’t even want to deal with them on a personal level because I don’t want to be disappointed. And I kind of realized that’s just, to me it was kind of like, I really wasn’t living life doing that. I was trying to keep myself too protected and it was like that’s not healthy, not good ... And then just being able to talk to somebody, really openly, that helped too. Because, I mean, I still talked openly to other people in the shelter, but maybe not as openly as I did in the counseling ... I had never really done that either.

Patricia was also able to adjust and in so doing experience growth. She described her arrival at the shelter as “overwhelming,” mostly because she had spent significant time living alone. However, she stated:

I eventually kind of nailed it into with [the counselor’s] help actually because, I tell you the truth, my first week here I cried the whole week. And I didn’t sleep. And I honestly was that filled with such an overwhelming emotions I really wanted to get a machete and just cut everybody up ... But eventually, you know, I had to accept it. I don’t want to say accept it, but get used to the fact that this is not as bad as I thought.

In so doing she was then able to work on her anger and to accept the generosity of others. Lisa also adjusted and grew from her experience being homeless. She stated, “I benefited from the whole experience. It made me a better person. The whole experience. I can’t tell you one specific thing that didn’t make me a better person.”

Research partners commented on another area of adjustment – the need to focus on “me and mines.” The adjustment to shelter living includes learning how to cohabit with a motley group of individuals and families. It means learning to adapt to rules set by

others. These experiences often cause residents to focus on what other people are doing to the detriment of their own program. Lisa observed this dynamic when she stated:

I know being homeless your thoughts are not where they should be. You start worrying about things you shouldn't be worrying about. Like the, I can't even worry about the crap going on in the shelter. But you tend to lose focus.

In light of the tendency to lose focus, Lisette commented:

I was here to take care of me and my program and my son. So that's what I focused on ... I'm focusing on me and mine and where I gotta go and that's it. [Conflict with another resident is a] distraction I'm not going to let distract me.

Anthony explained how his experience with counseling helped him to refocus on his own needs. As a single parent of five children, Anthony could not afford to be distracted by the drama of shelter living.

Just, you know, just focusing, you know, on me at that time and looking at my needs. And telling me how I can go about, you know, certain things. And it was, to me it was really religious based. You know [the counselor] wouldn't force it on no one but she saw that, you know, that's what I was trying to do was trying to get myself right, you know, with God. Get closer.

Jessica also shared how counseling helped her to focus on her own needs. She stated:

It was kind of like, it was really helpful, because it made me focus on like my priority to my son, and then who I gotta go help my husband out but at the same time, if somebody say something else I don't have to worry about what people say or something. Yeah it kind of helped me.

Finally, the fifth psychological concept presented by research partners relates to identity and the partners' struggle to maintain their identities during the homeless experience. Jamie struggled during her experience of homelessness to maintain her identity and to continue feeling empowered. Jamie discussed this difficulty in counseling during her residence at the shelter. The following is a case note excerpt:

Ct presented with concern regarding a change in her identity. Ct stated that the “old Jamie” would have left her job due to her confidence and her unwillingness to be subservient to others. Ct stated that the “present Jamie” is passive, worries that she’ll “get stuck in homelessness” and fears that she could not get another job.

While Jamie was disappointed in her subservience and disempowerment, during the interview years later Jamie commented that her job “helped to keep my perspective of who I have been in my entire life. It helped to keep me balanced and to not feel that I was a total loser.” As we heard earlier, she referred to her job as her “salvation.”

Jennifer, who was living in transitional housing at the time of the interview, also talked about how her homeless experience was taking its toll on her identity. As a result of how low she felt about herself, she commented:

That’s why I’m getting back into the financial industry, because I’m still licensed through there and I know that I can make money through there. And I know that’s where, where I’m in an environment where I dream bigger and I know, I know who I am. I know like, it just reminds me that I’m a great mother, that I’m an upstanding person, you know, like to other people and that, it just reminds me of the goals that I have. That I’m not going to let go of. You know like the certain car that I want and paying for the boys’ education and making like a shitload of money to leave for my grandbabies or something.

Even at the very beginning of her homeless experience, Crystal foreshadowed that it would change her identity.

Even in fact the first day I was there I was like, who am I going to be when I’m here. I actually had that thought because I got there, I was putting my stuff away and nobody was there. And I was like just waiting, the clock ticking, because they told me at a certain time people start coming you know. And I was like what am I going to, how am I going to be when they get here? What kind of a person am I going to be?

Crystal eventually felt comfortable to be herself, but recognized how the experience changes one’s identity. She noted that people experiencing homelessness need their self-esteem “boosted.” According to Crystal:

I think a lot of the women, especially the women there, they would get kind of down on themselves. Like [being homeless is] just who they were. Like it defined them. So I think maybe helping them separate that from who they are, just the situation that they're in that they can get out.

As we will see in the review of the psychological literature, homelessness changes one's identity and, the longer one is homeless, the more difficult it can be to feel empowered.

Support

Due to the fact that this study aims to examine how care and counseling services are received by shelter residents, the researcher was keen to explore research partners' experiences of support. Some partners did not feel they had received support in any way, while others noted how they felt supported by their children, their partners, the fellow shelter residents, the staff and the counselors. In this section we turn to explore both the absence and presence of support as experienced by the research partners.

At the time of the initial counseling session, counselors assess clients' social systems by asking about friends in the area and who, if anyone, the client is able to share concerns with. In a review of the intake case notes, clients frequently reported having no friends in the local area and often lacked confidants with whom to discuss their concerns. After five years of homelessness, Wrakisha's case note indicated the following:

Ct states she does not have a stable friend since she is homeless. Although she makes friends, friends come in and out of relationship. Ct states in her situation it is hard to maintain long-term relationship.

Even those without an extensive history of homelessness often do not experience support. This was the case for Lisette, who commented during the interview that "At the time I didn't have any support. It was just basically myself ... I was just completely abandoned by everything and everyone and it was just not a good place for me." When I asked Mary about her sources of support during her experience in the shelter she simply

shook her head. “Nothing?” asked the researcher. No. In an attempt to flee from domestic violence, Briteny called family members to see if she could stay with them, even just for a night. But “they said no because of the kids and just different things like that. So I ended up staying in the hotel that night and my kids’ dad came back that night but however it happened he went to work. The police caught him.”

As her shame prevents her from confiding in her friends and family in the Midwest, LaToya’s potential sources of support are thus quite limited.

I couldn’t really say my friends and family because they don’t really know what I’m going through because they’re not out here. They don’t know. They’re in Michigan. So that’s all the support I really have. That’s all the support I have. Just people there basically, people in the shelter.

Friendships developed in the shelter, as in LaToya’s case, are often a means of support for those with and without external support systems. Little support also makes LaToya’s life as a single parent quite difficult. She continued stating:

I don’t have anybody out here that I trust, as far as friends, that I trust to pick my kids up at a certain time ... If I had like people to help me out ... But I don’t let that get me down. I just tell myself like it’s just me. I have to do it you know. So that’s what I’m working on.

Moreover, as we heard earlier, LaToya did not “click” with her counselor and therefore did not continue the counseling process which could have offered another potential source of support.

Research partners also commented on instances where they did not feel supported by shelter staff. Susan experienced a lack of support as she felt that the staff was not working as hard as they could on her behalf because she also had a case manager in the community. LaToya also felt a lack of support from the staff. In reference to one of the shelter staff members, LaToya stated:

She treats us sometimes like we're just like nothing ... I just felt like she can show a little bit more concern for our needs instead of just being like, just, she's her and she can do whatever she wanna do. And if she is doing what she, everything that she can do, then at least kind of show us.

In addition, Art, Patricia and Freddie all wished the shelter staff would have shown a little more support in their search for shelter and employment. In reflecting on the type of support he wished he had received, Art stated:

I guess if they see something like for work they can tell you. Or like take you there. Something like that. They be telling you you can do it. Something like that. Maybe go with you once in a while to look for work ... Cause you know sometimes you feel down, you know, because you keep going to places and they say, "No we're not hiring." Or when you go to fill out an application someplace they say, "We don't even have applications because things are so slow." They won't even take it. So you know like you want to give up sometimes but you know you can't.

In summarizing the research partners' comments, it seems that these residents did not experience the staff's support as "accompaniment" or "journeying with" the residents as they attempted to transcend their homeless circumstance.

In contrast to those who felt an absence of support, many research partners expounded on the support they received from their children, their partners, the fellow shelter residents, the staff and the counselors. Mothers and fathers alike commented on how they experience their children as sources of motivation and support. When asked how she sustained herself during her homeless experience, Lisette, whose five-year-old son was playing nearby during the interview, stated:

That little guy ... He was my focus. As long as I focused on him and doing the best that I can for him then that's what keeps me ... He is my guidance. He is what keeps me on the straight and narrow. Because who knows maybe I could have gone down the wrong path with the drugs and not having a purpose in my life anymore.

Briteny also considers her children to be a motivating factor.

I would have been gave up and left and probably went with my mom or been stressed out or whatever. But my kids. They're the reason why I wake up in the morning. They're the reason why I keep pushing. They're the reason why I get up and go to work too. You know. But they're the reason.

The researcher then asked Briteny if she considers her children to be a source of support to which she replied:

Oh definitely. Heck for sure! But you know it's really difficult. That's why my daughter is the way she is cause she used to be there for me when I was, I mean she was two and I'd be crying on her shoulder. Oh Lord! So she's seen me go through a lot. My mom told me she's never going to forget you and her dad fighting and all of that. She's like that affects kids a lot ... And it's true and that's why she's so tough. She doesn't ever let me slip up boy. The whole time.

Art also experienced his girlfriend's son as a source of motivation and support. Although the child resided with them in the shelter, after continued homelessness Art and Jessica had to let her father provide full-time care for her son. When asked what has sustained them through their ongoing homelessness, Jessica responded that it was "each other." But to Art it was more about his girlfriend's son. He stated, "I think getting back on my feet so that we can get him back. We miss him know you. He's part of our family."

Like Jessica, other couples commented on how their partners provided support. Jamie's first visit to Our House had been almost twenty years ago. At that time she was residing there with her boyfriend and her daughter. Jamie commented on the difference between being a member of a homeless family vs. a single homeless adult.

I think being there with a family you have someone that you feel like you're in the same circle. And you have someone to relate to. Someone to, you know, if you go to your room you're there you have someone to talk to. Or someone to watch television. You know it's more like a, you have someone to communicate with more. But uh, being there alone, having, after having lost contact with my daughter it was just, you know, I was really depressed.

As a result of having companionship, Martha and Freddie felt that other shelter residents were jealous of their relationship. Martha noted, “I was fortunate to have a husband. To be there. To work. And sometimes I had a hard time because I saw the jealousy within people. The thing is it’s just like it’s not my fault that I have somebody with me.” When asked what it was like to be a couple in the shelter, Jessica and Art posited the possibility that “maybe the other people were jealous” – which caused them both to laugh. But according to Jessica “we help each other a lot.” Freddie concurred.

I have a lot of support with my wife. I really feel like that was one of the strong things coming in here was that me and my wife were on the same wavelength. I really think that overall, you know, the way they had the shelter set up with the chores and with the everything together that that was a real big help.

In addition to receiving support from their children and, for some from their spouses, research partners also described how friendships developed within the shelter. LaToya considered the cultivation of friendships to be a positive outcome of her homeless experience.

I got to meet so many like people. This is the most people I ever met since I’ve been in California. The only thing I did was go to work, come home, go to work, come home. And I never really went out and met people. But now I have met like some great people at this place. I made friends. I made some, I wouldn’t say enemies, but I don’t know. But I met some friends. Some really great people.

Crystal also made friends and received support from others in the shelter. In reflecting on her time in the shelter, Crystal noted, “I got emotional support and made friends. People I still talk to. In fact [fellow shelter resident] called me yesterday to tell me she was getting her place. And I was like so excited for her.” Crystal considered this a “life skill,” because she used to have difficulty trusting people and feeling comfortable to open up.

Wrakishia also experienced the support of other shelter residents. While able to note that times were not always good, she commented:

They were, like I said when I was there, they might got on my nerves, but like I was just telling you I still staying in contact with them. Still stay in contact with them because it's a blessing. They took care of me. I took care of them. It's a blessing.

Lisa also received the blessing of the support of fellow shelter residents. She stated, "I made long-term friendships with them. It just didn't end because we were in the shelter." And such friendships also offer material as well as emotional support. After getting her own apartment, Lisa received a "blessing" from a friend she met in the shelter.

I've been so blessed. It's like when [another shelter resident] came over she said, "Lisa, you know I have a cousin that had the gastric bypass surgery and she can't fit the clothes and they're too big for me so I brought them for you. And there's a couple things in there for [Lisa's daughter]." Well God is my witness I got like two of these sweat suits, two outfits still with price tags still on them. A gown and a robe. About four pairs of jeans. I mean beautiful things. And jeans – how can you go wrong! I work in jeans. And like you gave me a compliment on my hand me down outfit!

It is evident that research partners benefited from the support of their children, spouses and friends, but they also received support from shelter staff and counselors. Accounts of such support will be explored in more detail when we examine the research partners' experiences of pastoral care and counseling.

Homeless Parenting

As the shelter has only one room for a single adult female, the vast majority of shelter residents are parents. Parenting is a unique aspect of the homeless experience and merits brief mention. Many research partners shared their concern about bringing their children into a shelter environment. According to LaToya:

What I was most scared of is how my kids would adjust. So I was just kind of telling my daughter, “Okay, we’re going to stay at this place. We’re going to have like a smaller room.” ... So I told her, “It’s going to be, you know it’s probably going to be really uncomfortable so if you really don’t like it you know we’ll figure out where we’re going to go. But this is just where we have to go right now.”

In addition, a number of the research partners had regained custody of their children only shortly before becoming homeless and, in some cases, felt defensive in the face of relatives who judged them poor parents. Oftentimes the research partners had fought to regain custody, yet then experienced tremendous parental stress while residing in the shelter. Parenting in the shelter is like parenting in a fishbowl – there is no privacy and everyone is vigilant to watch your every move. Martha commented on this when she stated:

Especially when they would act up. I couldn’t yell at them so loud like hey. And I really felt like who would step on my toes was my kids, you know, because they knew I was in the situation to where I could really not, I’m not saying I abuse my kids, but I felt like they knew they could get away with it a lot more.

Freddie also commented on the impact of the fishbowl when he stated, “I think 95% of the conflict here has to do with that type of thing where people are not trying to do anything and everyone’s watching. It’s like you’re in a big arena.” He made the following comment about a fellow resident:

She’s leaving her baby, you know ... and they don’t want you to say nothing. But at the same time if you don’t say nothing, then you’re just as guilty as they are. Wait a minute. What if the place burned down and we didn’t know her baby was in the room and she’s gone down the street somewhere doing God knows what. You’re going to feel responsible because you didn’t say nothing.

Whereas many parents had to prove their adequacy to Child Protective Services and/or relatives, they then experience added pressure as they attempted to navigate parenting in

a fishbowl. Moreover, everyone has his or her own parenting style and method. Crystal talked extensively about how such parenting styles impacted life in the shelter.

We all had our own parenting style and it was funny because some of us, well I actually was told before that I was too hard on my daughter because I wouldn't let her have, you know, the sweets. Or she had to go to bed at a certain time. Even though we had like a curfew for them but I really stuck to it ... There was so many things that I was trying to help better our lifestyle together that I hadn't been able to do when we were with her dad. So I got told that I was being too hard. They're like just let her have another popsicle. No.

Like Crystal, Art also noted the stress that results from differing parenting styles. Art and Jessica experienced frustration when others tried to discipline their child. Art commented:

Everyone raise their kids different ways according to their culture, their race, you know, what kind of race they are, where they come from. And people say that's not the way to do it but, you know, in your family that's the way they been doing it since your grandma's age. So they're like ... getting into other people's business ... If he does something bad let us know and we tell him. We'll deal [with] it.

With a five year old son after five years of homelessness, Wrakishia responded that the most challenging part of homelessness is

living homeless with my child. Because he goes in and out of different places and seeing different things. And some things that he sees I don't even see that he sees them. He picks up on them. And then when we move to the next place I expect him to be the same as he was before the place we just came from, and I'm like where did he get this from? And it's not like bad habits. It's just like hyper habits to where he wants to be a child. He's only five. And by us living in different places, by me being a mother, I gotta watch him – you can't break this – you can't touch this ... He don't know what to do because then we move to the next place after that and it's like don't touch this. But mom, the last lady let me do this ... And I can't put a grown mind into a five year old.

Without consistency Wrakishia can hardly enforce any rules as the rules are always changing. And for a boy who has been homeless his entire life, very little in life is constant.

Finally, although the researcher is not a parent herself, participant observation offered unique insights into the culture of homeless parenting. For example, one evening shelter residents viewed Mel Gibson's film *Apocalypto*. In the film, the Mayans are facing the downfall of their kingdom and, in a last ditch effort, begin to build more temples and offer human sacrifices. Although the film is subtitled, a five year old and six year old sat next to the researcher, watching the film with rapt attention. Parents frequently fed themselves before preparing a plate for their children and at one point a parent left a plate of food on the floor for her five year old daughter. Children came in and out the side door with very little supervision and were often playing outside without the presence of an adult. During the researcher's stay she discovered a six year old boy who was frequently defecating and urinating in his pants and often wore diapers to school. His mother worked the graveyard shift and he'd been raised almost single-handedly by his sixteen year-old sister. The researcher witnessed parents go to bed before their children, leaving them in the living room for other shelter residents to attend to, and heard many comments such as "do it and I'll pop you" and "get over here before I smack you." But at the same time, the researcher observed a sense of community – children playing with one another, sharing their snacks with one another, working together on a project; parents offering to babysit for one another and cooperatively caring for one another's children. A final observation about homeless parenting is that many of the parents, especially of the youngest children, are with their children 24/7. They often do not have childcare resources outside the shelter and thus must bring their children to job interviews, housing appointments, and long waits in public service offices.

Resources

Resources, specifically material and informational resources, play a significant role in the homeless experience. Research partners commented on both the availability and the lack of resources. Some complained about a lack of bus passes, limited job referrals and resources, not having access to a phone or computer, and having to be out of the shelter between nine and four with nowhere to go. Many research partners compared the resources available in emergency housing to those available in transitional housing, and noted that at Our House they were not provided with financial support, free car maintenance, and moving resources. Yet they also commented on the many ways in which their needs were met. Some of these resources will be discussed in the exploration of the research partners' experiences with the volunteers. Yet, many research partners also commented on the resources available directly through the shelter. For example, each week residents are asked to complete a list requesting particular hygiene items. Martha commented on how nice it was to be asked for the things that you needed.

It was nice because you were asked the things that you needed. Like [now] I can't go ask somebody I need shampoo. I need this for my child. And my kids get allergic reaction to like generic pampers and they just weren't good. And [the housing manager] would give me good pampers, like either Pampers, Loves, Huggies ... So she would help me a lot. I liked it because they provide a lot of things for you. And that was like a break in life because today I gotta buy my shampoo, everything, toothpaste. And they provide everything like that to us. It was like a luxury to us. Like getting spoiled.

Crystal considers her shelter stay to be one of the least stressful experiences of her life. She noted that all of her needs were met which allowed her to focus on her own emotional care. Crystal remembered a time when a former resident provided the women with small hygiene kits.

I remember being so excited. This lady who actually stayed there, which is probably why she knew what to bring, but she brought us little bags full of

like, just little stuff like deodorant, you know like lotion and, you know, razors and like little like necessity things. But more women's needs kind of things.

For Wrakishia, Our House not only offered her the resource of free laundry, but also allowed her to “put up” some money so that in her next shelter she was able to afford to pay for laundry. In reflecting on the resources available she stated:

The washing. You know they provided the detergent, which was appreciated to where now I'm here and you gotta pay for washing and detergent. But by them not, by them helping me at Our House allowed me to not complain here because the money that I put up for the savings of washing there I can do it here and it's no stress.

Lisa found that even after leaving the shelter and securing her own apartment the staff continued to help her connect to available resources. Lisa said:

And even to this day [the house manager] still, she called me just this morning. “Hey Lisa, somebody emailed me about a stove. Just trying to make sure you had a stove you know.” “Hey Lisa, did the guy call you back about the bedroom furniture?”

Finally, the researcher was also given material resources upon moving into the shelter: toilet paper, lip balm, shampoo and conditioner, soap, Kleenex, razors and shaving cream, a toothbrush and toothpaste, deodorant, a brush and comb, body lotion, and, on loan, a comforter, sheets and a pillowcase, and a towel and washcloth.

Skill Building

In addition to receiving material resources, research partners also described how living in the shelter can help one to build new skills and talents. After spending much of her childhood in residential facilities with no parental example, Martha described how the shelter helped her to cultivate life skills.

I really felt like it taught you how to be like responsible. Sometimes, like some people daily routines, you know, like clean up after each meal so you could come home to a clean home, you know. So it's basically like

chores and ... when you move out it kind of does stick with you and help you in your future ... So it helped me a lot. Like a lot of the stuff we cooked here I liked a lot so I try to cook like that today. So just basically like responsibilities, being neat and all that stuff, was really a big thing because sometimes I wasn't too much of a neat person ... And today personally I know how to budget. Like I could stretch out a hundred dollars like for over a week.

Even Martha's husband Freddie commented on how the shelter taught her to cook. He said, "To this day Martha still makes homemade potatoes every time we eat dinner because the homemade potatoes were so delicious ... She was always getting these little like food pointers off of everything like you know and she uses them."

When she arrived at the shelter, Crystal had difficulty trusting others and feeling that she could share her true emotions.

My social skills I guess improved while I was there. Living with so many people I kind of, it was weird to be antisocial I guess with us all there, so I learned a little bit more how to communicate and communicate on a more, I guess honest level instead of hiding away if I'm feeling bad ... So it kind of taught me how to be that way in other areas of my life than just being at the shelter. So those things kind of carried with me too.

Wrakishia shared how she learned how to save and to keep clean dwellings during her tenure at Our House. Yet, in her honesty, Wrakishia reported that she wasn't too pleased about doing these things at that time.

When they first was asking me for putting up the money I'm like, "This is my money!" And then, but then if I didn't put it up it would have been ridiculous to not even relevant ... When I was there it was ho! I just cleaned this bathroom. Why are all these people messing it up? Or, why do we even have to clean? ... But now it's more of a like enjoying situation, because now that I'm at this place I don't have to share a restroom and now I want to get up and clean.

Susan reported that she learned interview skills. Patricia noted the anger management techniques she'd learned and had put into practice. Jennifer commented on the value of the communication skills she learned in the group counseling sessions. While research

partners were not asked to comment directly on any skills they had cultivated, many of them were able to identify how something they'd learned in the shelter was influencing their current lifestyle and choices.

In examining the homeless experience, eight major themes emerged. They include the reasons given for homelessness, insights into the culture of homelessness, shelter dynamics, residents' self-reported psychological status, both the presence and absence of support, homeless parenting, resources and skill building. The above examination of these themes helps to facilitate an understanding of what it is like to be homeless and residing in a shelter. The reader should now have a sense of the emotions that often accompany homelessness, the strains of homeless parenting, the dynamics of living in a shelter, and the culture of homelessness itself.

Experiences with Pastoral Care and Counseling

With an understanding of the overall homeless experience, we now turn to examine how research partners experienced the pastoral care and counseling services offered by shelter staff, counselors and the volunteers. It is evident in the results above that research partners receive care and support from one another as well as others in their lives. However, this study aims to examine, in light of the research partners' homeless experience, how they experience the more formal, less organic, care and counsel offered to them.

Shelter Staff

Research partners reported to experience support from, as well as conflict with, shelter staff. In addition to receiving support through the staff's provision of resources, research partners noted additional examples of support and care provided by shelter staff.

For Lisette, the case manager helped her to get an arrest and conviction expunged from her record. Now in applying for jobs, she can indicate that she has not been convicted of a felony. Lisette said, “[The case manager] was very helpful in that. In helping get that skeleton out of my closet. And I feel it’s not haunting me. I feel much better.” Jamie felt the case manager went

above and beyond trying to help. And she knew that my goal was to move back home to my hometown and she tried to set up some resources for me in that area. She did try to motivate me as far as possibly advancing within the company or trying to find other employment. She went above and beyond.

According to Susan, the housing manager told her Bible verses and helped her to reframe her negative feelings. Susan said, “[The housing manager] was always, you know, positive. So that made me feel good.” Martha felt she could go to the staff at any time. And for LaToya, whose friends and family in the Midwest were unaware of her homeless status, conversations with the case manager were a lifeline. She reflected, “Every time I had a problem I would talk to her and she’d kind of just tell me, you know, just tell me straight up how it is and what I need to do to get it right.” The case manager also helped Crystal to believe that she could achieve more than what she previously thought she could.

[The case manager] would, you know, give me emotional support. She’d always tell me, you know, “You can do this. I want you to get permanent housing.” And made me think like, cause I had considered going into transitional and she was like, “No, you don’t need it. You can do it on your own.” Kind of like gave me that little extra push like yeah, I can do it ... She would always tell me, “Oh you’re doing so good.” ... So it kind of made me start thinking I can. And I was hopeful.

Wrakishia also experienced the support of the shelter staff.

They were very, like anything depressing or came to mind that was like a failure, you could go straight to them and they’ll lift you up ... I’m going

to miss [the case manager]. She worked her heart out. She made sure everybody was happy. Everybody. You could talk to her about anything without being scared. Without holding back.

But not everything between the staff and residents was positive or went smoothly. Susan felt at times that she was bothering shelter staff. She also felt the case manager was not working hard to help her because she also had a community-based case manager. Freddie was upset because he felt that his case management appointments were frequently cancelled.

[The case manager] met with us, but she would always cancel her meetings. She'd always cancel out. And, "Oh, I talked to you already in the hallway." Maybe she knew on her behalf, on her defense, maybe she knew that we were in tune with what we were doing. Maybe she did meet with the other people, I don't know. But we always felt like we already had our direction when we came here.

And while Freddie stated that they had their direction, after six months in the shelter when the usual stay is only three, they were left without a plan.

Three months into it [the case manager] said, "This is what you're going to be doing." At the end of six months she was like, "Well, what are you guys going to do?" Huh? We thought you said you already took care of that? "Well I never said that." I go, "Well yeah you did. I have a photographic memory. You said this is what we're going to be doing on this day." She goes, "No you must have misunderstood what I said." With a plain face knowing that you're not the one that's lying ... That was the bad part of it. Because she went from one day to the next, three months went by without telling us, "Hey I don't have nothing worked out for you guys."

Lisa recalled her own conflict with the housing manager when she said:

Once I told her off – in a polite way. Basically like, "Who the hell do you think you are? Because if we weren't in this situation you wouldn't have a job." And so when you approach somebody it was like an eye opening for her and the more I talked to her the more of a shell she came out of in expressing herself. And then when I actually listened to her story I actually felt sorry for her. Because the socialization skills that I took for granted she just never had the opportunity to be exposed to it and then be thrust into it ... Now she's like, to me, a blossoming butterfly compared to

how she was all tight ... [She] came off of that bull shit she was on and came down to eye level.

Participant observation permitted the researcher to witness some of the dynamics between shelter residents and staff. The most striking observation is that, while individual relationships often afford residents the feeling of support, there is a marked us/them mentality among shelter residents. For example, the thermostat in the shelter remains locked and residents are not able to change the temperature. Although the winter had dragged on, there was no need to have the heat on in April. The thermostat was set at 76 degrees, and we were all hot and complaining. As we collectively tried to think of solutions, shelter residents made numerous comments about how staff do not listen to them and, on the rare occasion that they do, they often fail to follow through with requests or changes. The researcher observed that while residents may feel support when they are in the staff's offices, they do not necessarily feel supported in the shelter. Although the staff conduct a one-hour house meeting in the shelter each week, residents rarely see staff in the shelter. This exacerbates the us/them dynamic as residents are most definitely isolated.

Counselors

Residents also addressed their relationships with members of the pastoral counseling staff. This section addresses the following three themes: the positives of counseling; the shortcomings of counseling; and the topics addressed in counseling. Residents conveyed various ways in which the counseling experience did not meet their needs. Upon arriving at the shelter, residents are deluged with information, rules, and restrictions. The shelter staff informs them that they are required to attend an individual intake counseling session; however, this is one piece of information among many. Thus,

for some residents the counseling experience is accompanied by significant anxiety.

Jennifer recalled her nervousness during and following the intake counseling session:

I couldn't understand him at first. He'd ask me questions about like why are we here. And I really didn't know who he was or why. So when I left the intake session I asked some of the girls well who is this and they're like we don't know who that is. So I was like upset. Like who is this guy who just asked me all these questions. Then I find out I guess he was like kind of new or something.

When Jennifer returned from her session, she quickly began to distrust the counselor, asking other residents if they knew who he was and why he had asked her so many personal questions. Jennifer's counselor was new to the shelter and so the other residents were not familiar with him. Jennifer explained that

I felt violated because I was like, "Oh my God – who did I just talk to then, you know?" Cause I've never been in this situation before so I don't know who I'm not supposed to be talking to. But after, after I realized that he came about the same time I was, I was like oh okay. But it was an intake so he just asked me questions and that was it.

Other residents reported not "clicking" with their counselor. According to LaToya:

I think the counseling is good to have because you do need someone to talk to, but just me and her wasn't clicking together. I felt like she didn't understand and I still feel like that in groups. That's why I just kind of smile when I'm in the group with her because ... it's like I say something to her and she's just like this. She's just staring at me. And I'm like I'm done, you know, I'm done talking.

Wrakisha also did not "click" with her counseling. She commented, "It was alright, she just didn't say much. I didn't know what to give her because she didn't say anything ... when I met with her one on one she really wasn't, wasn't, you know, real quiet person. It's not like [she explored] what are you here for?" For some research partners, the anxiety, distrust, and disconnect resulted in feeling that the counselors didn't care and

were just going through the motions. In talking with Jennifer about her own disconnect with the counselors, she commented:

It felt like, kind of like how when other, how [the case manager] and the other girls from [another shelter] when they're sitting there asking you questions it's just to write it down on the paper cause it's part of the process. Some people when they have their career, their jobs, if they're not passionate about it then it's just, it's just all wrong.

LaToya's perception was similar. She stated:

To me it seemed like she don't care. Like she's doing it just because. Like I don't feel like she really cared what I had to say because if she did she would respond like wow, you know. Really, she would take a minute and she would say something off the wall that I don't even understand and I would be like okay.

Many research partners noted that they would have benefited from more counseling. For some, this feeling was the result of a positive counseling experience, while for others it was not. Mary wanted more counseling, but recalled frequent cancellations by the counselor.

I mean, it would have been nice to have more one on one time with [the counselor] ... Which, you know, sometimes she cancelled. She had other things going on so I didn't get as much as I wanted ... there was a couple meetings where we couldn't meet because she had some girl somewhere else who was committing suicide or something ... she had to go with her for a few weeks so we never got a chance to talk again.

Martha also experienced cancellations by the counselor. She said, "There were times she wouldn't show up because she got caught up with stuff ... so I just told her no more ... it was back and forth, but it was really like on her part." Jessica reflected that one source of support she wished she would have had during her stay at Our House would have been counseling. She said, "I think for me counseling. Some kind of therapy or something. Because I have like a lot of issues. So for me I have a lot or problems with my family." The researcher asked Jessica if she was able to address her issues with the shelter

counselor, to which she responded, “Kind of. I think a lot of times it had to do with the time limit because she had to see other people too.”

Finally, research partners named their own and others’ resistance to the mandatory group counseling. Mary recalled feeling like “I don’t want to go. It’s seven o’clock. I want to eat dinner or whatever. Watch TV.” Crystal, who personally “didn’t really have gripes about” the group counseling, commented on the resistance of other shelter residents when she stated:

Most of the other people did. They didn’t like going. Or they complained when they were there. “Can we leave now?” Or it was just like, I mean I felt like you could be using this stuff like learning things, going forward with your life. And that used to frustrate me ... They just thought they could be better off sitting in the shelter.

Susan also shared her frustration with other residents related to the group counseling.

I used to get irritated because people were, I thought people were rude. Especially this one lady came. She only came once. And she was, that was when we did our personalities. And they were ignoring her and talking among themselves and I was ahhhh, and then I’d say, “Excuse me, lady’s talking.” “Oh.” And then that would last for about two minutes and then they’d go again.

Wrakishia, although she noted that she wasn’t “pointing fingers or anything,” commented that the counselors should not “let the clients run the group. Because we’re not getting paid. Not like that, but we’re there to learn something. Not to talk a lot.”

In addition to the research partners’ feelings of dissatisfaction, they also shared how they experienced support and caring through their counseling experiences. Many research partners commented on the value of “unloading” and putting voice to their own narratives. For Lisette, sharing her story with the counselor was affirming. She said her counseling experience

was very nice ... I got to unload. You know, tell her where I'm coming from, what I felt at that time ... you know, when you get to bring it all up, where you started and where you're at now it's like gosh, I do have a lot on my plate.

Jamie also felt that counseling afforded her the opportunity to “unload” and to regain “balance.” She said

I almost felt like if I didn't have those meetings with [the counselor] once a week that I would lose a part of my balance ... because I was able to come and sit and talk about my family and, you know, the things that, I mean, that don't matter to, you know, someone you don't know. I was able to talk about those things that I enjoyed and I was able to talk about the things that bothered me.

Martha felt that the group counseling provided her with a forum to “let out what was going on.” She reflected on the release she felt by sharing when she stated, “To me a lot of times when you talk about your childhood and everything, sometimes it like relieves something inside of you.” Wrakishia considered it an opportunity to “tell you guys different things that was going on in the shelter.” Therefore, both individual and group counseling sessions, according to some research partners, offered a safe space to “unload” about their own lives as well as the life in the shelter.

Research partners also reported feeling supported by the counseling staff.

According to Crystal, her

main source [of support] was [her counselor.] And the fact that I had the communication with [my counselor], that was a very uplifting, because it gave me that, it helped to give me another balance. It helped to keep me balanced because I could communicate with someone that was unbiased and [she] listened ... If it hadn't been for being able to talk to [my counselor], you know, just talk to [her], and having that job, I don't think I could have, I don't think I would have made it.

For Anthony, counseling also helped to regain a sense of balance and feel support.

Sometime I just, I was just like off balance because going, you know, back and forth with the kids and everything. I really wasn't getting no rest. A

lot of times I would just, you know, be real tired ... we had the one on one sessions, it was real helpful ... just focusing, you know, on me at that time and looking at my needs. Telling me how I can go about, you know, certain things ... [it] just helped me a lot.

For Patricia, her counselor “was the biggest source” of support.

[My counselor] made me reach down. She held up a mirror and made me look at it. And I still keep her words in the back of my head and read my Bible everyday ... She gave me papers that I still have pinned up, taped to my wall on how do I feel that day ... and she taught me how to identify personally my rage, my meters.

Patricia spoke extensively about the benefit of her counseling experience. Moreover, both

Jamie and Patricia continued their counseling relationships following their stay in the shelter. Finally, although she had been in individual counseling for nearly eight years,

Wrakishia noted the support provided through the group counseling process.

The number one thing that I can say that I left there with was just to hang on ... Be strong. To be strong ... Some of the sessions that we had had, it was nice. Like we had to write our thoughts down on the paper and talk about our families. And I left there, I came in there dwelling on my family. I left there not saying I don't care, but this is my life. So that's one thing you guys taught me – like to just look at yourself and when you're done looking at yourself from foot to head keep looking up, and continue looking up, and everything will be okay.

In light of our understanding of how research partners experienced their relationships with the pastoral counselors, we now turn to examine common themes present in the counseling relationships. Based both on the research partners' self-reports and recollections, as well as their case notes, the following seven topics were prevalent in the therapeutic context: anger issues; boundaries; grief; living sober; identity issues; trust; and trauma and abuse. According to case notes, numerous research partners indicated that they wished to address “anger management” in the counseling process. Research partners noted experiences in which they had difficulty controlling their anger in public, many

times in relation to oppressive or discriminating behaviors and circumstances. Although they rarely used the word “boundaries,” research partners often spoke about difficulties with assertiveness and meeting their own needs as well as others’. The following is an excerpt from one of Jamie’s case notes:

Ct also reported that since she started counseling she has found it easier to say no to the ladies at work when they ask her to work their hours and she doesn’t want to. Ct attributes this boundary to the things she’s learned in therapy about self-care.

Numerous research partners also presented with feelings of grief, often related to the death of someone with whom they were quite close, including mothers, grandmothers, nieces, and daughters. Most often the deaths discussed occurred within the past one to two years and, given the stress and chaos of homelessness, research partners had experienced very little time and space to grieve. Crystal and Martha both wondered why they missed their mothers so much when the relationships were almost exclusively painful. Such experiences frequently result in complicated grief, which is what Jamie also experienced as a result of having been estranged from her daughter for over two years. Case notes indicate how such losses resulted in research partners’ feeling “stagnant,” with a decreased motivation to continue struggling.

As a number of the research partners have a history of substance abuse, sobriety and the difficulties that result from sober living was also a theme in some counseling sessions. A case note from a session with Martha included the following:

Ct states that she is finding it hard to stay sober and clean from drugs. Ct states that when she was on drugs it was easier to cope with the stress and problems in her life ... there are times when she wants to get high.

Martha reported feeling “overwhelmed” and, while she desired to attend NA, it was often difficult without adequate childcare for her five children.

Counseling afforded research partners the chance to reflect on their own self-understanding and identity, as well as the way in which they feel others perceive them. For Lisa, one goal of her therapy was to “soften up,” because she felt people “are always scared of me at first impression.” This related both to her personality and her body image. Crystal also explored her own identity change. A case note excerpt from Crystal’s counseling stated, “Ct stated that her identity is changing back to her former self before she was with her ex for the past eight years.” As a result, Ct began to have “more peace with herself and doubts herself less.”

Research partners reported difficulty trusting others. This often resulted from family of origin issues, experiences of abuse, and difficulty with intimate relationships. Therefore, many research partners were impaired in their ability to cultivate adequate support systems. An excerpt from a case note on Patricia stated:

Ct reported that she does not have many friends and that she is not comfortable making friends because she does not trust people easily for fear of rejection and getting hurt. Ct reported that her only male friend has been more persistent in keeping them connected.

Intimately related to difficulty developing trusting relationships was research partners’ past and present experiences of abuse. During their individual intake sessions, most shelter residents reported some form of verbal, emotional, physical or sexual abuse. Research partners reflected this trend and described experiences of domestic violence at the hands of a boyfriend, spouse, or parent during childhood, adolescence, young adulthood and just prior to entering the shelter. Although not documented by self-report or case notes, I suspect that abuse continues for some residents during their residence in the shelter. Over the years a number of female residents living with or without their

children in the shelter appear to be involved in physically, verbally, and/or emotionally abusive relationships with partners living outside the shelter.

Volunteers

Shelter residents described both negative and positive experiences of pastoral care provided by shelter volunteers. The negative experiences often included anxiety and discomfort. Martha, who herself indicated that she felt “scary, like nervous, like shy” around the volunteers, had to comfort her son when one of the volunteers was a boy from his school. She shared, “My son got embarrassed because one of the kids were in his school. And they came and he was all ‘Mom.’ But he was like, ‘Well, don’t be embarrassed. It’s okay.’” As we previously heard, LaToya was also embarrassed when the volunteers were workers from her daughter’s preschool. Although Crystal did not know any of the volunteers, her anxiety resulted from the grief she experienced during the holidays following her mother’s death. One Sunday evening when “lots of people” came to provide a Thanksgiving dinner for the residents, Crystal reported feeling responsible for “entertaining” the volunteers and adopting a “hostess mentality.” However, Crystal’s true desire was to retreat to her room and avoid the holidays all together.

We had a lot of people coming in during the holidays. They were coming in bringing like tons of food, which is nice, but we also, like they came in to have like Thanksgiving dinner and that was hard for me because my mom and I just wasn’t into celebrating the holidays. And you kind of felt obligated because they were all there.

Patricia recalled having her first “panic attack” when a group of volunteers came for Sunday dinner and the number of people in the shelter became physically uncomfortable.

I was sitting towards the kitchen on top of the 24 people that we had including kids in the shelter as it was, there was a good 30 more in the

shelter, just in that one room. And I think she described it as I started to turn green ... I guess sweat just began to run, just run like somebody was pouring an invisible pitcher over my head ... I couldn't breathe.

Jessica attributed her own discomfort with the volunteers to the fact that she's not a "socializer." She said, "I'm just like really shy or just, cause I'm not a communication person." Lisa voiced her frustration that some volunteers wanted to take pictures.

Like some of them just wanted to drop off the food, take pictures and leave ... No adult wanted to be in the picture. And then I didn't like it sometimes when they brought cameras because I felt like they were trying to capture pictures of us without our permission. I didn't like that. So sometimes I would just go into the room until they left, you know, to keep from being rude.

While some research partners reported feelings of anxiety and discomfort in the presence of volunteers, others were quite enthusiastic about the fellowship that can occur with volunteers over a Sunday evening dinner. According to Jamie:

You're always going to have people that are going to complain or say, "This should have been that way," you know, some of the residents. But I would say 85% of the people in there were happy that they came. And even if they had cooked that day or something, if they came later it was like a, it was like someone cared you know. When you bring food, you bring love. And it shows that you care and people really need that at that time in their lives.

According to Anthony, the volunteers were one of God's blessings.

It was another one of God's blessing, you know, to have someone prepare a meal for everyone in the shelter – more than they need, you know. And then sit down and talk to them. And so tell them about, you know, certain programs that they might have available.

After expressing his interest in getting his General Educational Development (GED), one of the volunteers returned the next time with books for Anthony that he would need to take the course.

Mary also appreciated the generosity of the volunteers. She recalled

We appreciated that because here's someone going out of their way to reach out to someone. You know what I mean? And they did it not because they had to – it wasn't like a class they had to go to – they did it cause they wanted to. For us it was a treat, you know what I mean, cause they brought, you know, when you're there they've got like a menu. If it's steak, you eat steak. But they would bring like chips and soda and stuff. You know it was a treat. We can't go out to dinner there ... so dinner came to us.

For Patricia, the volunteers' generosity helped her to reframe her present circumstance.

The generosity was also something that made me have to sit back and look. It's not bad, you know. It had me realize that it was not bad. I was safe. I was being fed. I had a bed to lay in. I had a roof over my head. It's okay.

Martha talked about the difference between the volunteers who share in fellowship and those that simply serve the food.

I liked how the people came, like when they served you dinner or stuff like that, I liked how they sat around and talked to you. And they would converse with their own, with each other, and with the kids ... and the ladies from lady of the assumption or something – Our Lady of Assumption – I like them cause a lot of them would come and sit down and eat with you. Sometimes they would just give you your food and go and we would feel like awkward. Like wow. Okay. Whatever. But these people like sat with you, get to know you, talk to you. You know. It was really nice.

Freddie recalled that when the volunteers came to serve dinner they frequently “brought crafts for the kids and crayons and it was just a big, it was a blast!” Lisa also commented on how fun the games were, as well as the fellowship she experienced.

And then the little games that they played with us. Nothing felt that they were trying to say, “You're needy. We're helping you.” It just felt like the love of God was in the room because even when I was bored, fed, full tired of the noise and stuff, they made me join into a game.

In addition to the volunteers who furnish Sunday evening dinner, other volunteers make their way in and out of the shelter. During Spring 2009, a middle-age woman completed a college internship by volunteering at the IVHP. Research partners who

resided in the shelter during her tenure of volunteering spoke extensively about the many ways she cared for and supported them. For Susan, this volunteer's care and support was especially valuable because she was just that – a volunteer. She was not being paid and this fact really struck Susan. She felt camaraderie with the volunteer and proudly said, "That's what she calls us. 'My Girls.' She's doing it out of her own, on her own volition." Susan recalled how touched she was by this volunteer's thoughtfulness.

I don't know how we got on the discussion of underwear and I said, "I'm sorry, I don't care how much you wash them, bleach them, whatever. I am not wearing someone else's used underwear. Even though I do need bras." Next thing you know, and then we were all discussing the different sizes. Next thing you know, she hands me this little bag of [bras] – "Oh thank you!" And that might have been why she left the tags on so that I would know they were brand new.

Jennifer also expressed how touched she was by this particular volunteer.

Probably the most from any of the volunteers I think would be from [her]. Cause she like drove us to get haircuts and I normally wouldn't let like anybody touch my hair except my hairdresser, but I mean I wasn't able to afford that anymore, so I was like okay I'm open. So it was kind of like, it was kind of neat. And she would talk to us normally ... she was just like regular.

Not only was this volunteer thinking ahead about the residents needs, arranging for haircuts, facials, bras and lunches in the park, but she communicated with them "normally" – treating the residents as more than "homeless."

Research partners reflected on the joy that volunteers bring to the Christmas holiday. The "adopt-a-family" program, as well as the multiple parties and festivities, make Christmas a truly magical time for shelter residents. Although Anthony wasn't living in the shelter over Christmas, he and his five children participated in the adopt-a-family program. He recalled that:

It was just a blessing cause [my kids] would have, you know, maybe got a few things for Christmas, but not like that. To come here and uh she [the housing manager] called me and told me, you know, the gifts was here. I'm just thinking maybe it's like one gift you know for each one of us and get here and all these bags of stuff. I had to call somebody, you know, and tell them to come [give me a ride]. So that was really great.

Martha, also with five children, recalled her own Christmas experience in the shelter.

You know they asked what I needed. And honestly I asked for comforters for like beds. And, you know what, they gave me the comforters for every single kid. With princess stuff and everything. Real beautiful stuff. It's stuff that I could not afford at one time.

Lisa commented on how great Christmas in the shelter was for her children, saying "That was the best Christmas me and my kids ever had." But she also shared her own excitement as an adult. All of the shelter residents had been invited to a local Christmas party. When she began to tire of the festivities, the host encouraged her to wait as "Santa hasn't come. Just wait for Santa. Santa's coming. Go ahead, sit down, sit down." Lisa's son was given a brand new bike and Lisa, along with all the other women, was blessed with a \$50 gift card to a local grocers.

As a homeless parent, Christmas often arrives with great anxiety and shame that one cannot adequately provide for oneself and one's children. Yet, for Wrakishia, the volunteers helped alleviate her concern.

Christmas was like the bomb. It was man. You know, it wasn't like there was a time that I would just sit there and like "I'm not with my family on Christmas. He doesn't get his. I can't buy him" – they did it all! ... Now that was the bomb ... I couldn't buy my baby anything for Christmas ... But I didn't have to. They gave us everything. I could not complain about nothing. They gave me household stuff, clothes, toys, what didn't they give us! Socks, underwear, soap. Everything. And it wasn't things only to enjoy it was things were needed, but still enjoyed at the same time. It was the bomb.

Positive experiences with the volunteers compelled research partners to want also to be a volunteer and give back. After securing their own place, Martha donated two toys at Christmas for other children in the shelter. Wrakishia's experience gave her the "motivation to help. That I would like to do what others did for me. To help." Briteny said one day she hopes to donate a car to one of the shelters where she lived. And Jennifer said, "I could see myself in a field like this where I'm helping people. Or helping people find their resources to help them."

Summary

As an exercise in practical theology, this chapter provides thick description of the research partners' experiences of homelessness with attention to current pastoral care and counseling practice. By employing ethnographic methods, the following eight themes emerge related to the research partners' experience of homelessness: reasons given for homelessness, insights into the culture of homelessness, shelter dynamics, residents' self-reported psychological status, both the presence and absence of support, homeless parenting, and resources and skill building. In addition, the following three themes surfaced regarding research partners' experiences with pastoral care and counseling: encounters with shelter staff, the counseling experience and content, and experiences with shelter volunteers. Based upon the above description of current practice, we now turn to engage selected theoretical sources of authority related to homelessness, as a part of constructing a call for revised praxis.

CHAPTER 3

CAN I GET A WITNESS?: THEORY AND RESEARCH ON HOMELESSNESS

Introduction

In accordance with Browning's critical correlational approach, we now turn from thick description of current practice to the examination of theory, specifically interdisciplinary sources of authority addressing the issue of homelessness. How one selects particular sources of authority from a vast body of literature is extremely important. Rebecca S. Chopp argues that a significant body of the practical theology literature is a "new 'play' on the old tag game of liberal, progressive theology that posits an underlying unity between individuals and tradition, and believes that it can reconcile, through understanding, human experience to reality."¹ Chopp contends that Browning's process of selecting sources is oversimplified and hegemonic, which causes her to question the adequacy of Browning's method. Chopp utilizes various liberation theologies to illustrate how the analysis of current practice within practical theology is often interpreted through a white, male, bourgeois hermeneutic yet is labeled common experience. Thus the experience of particular group, a group of privilege and power, is universalized.² Second, in addition to the distortion of experience, tradition itself is full of distortions and omissions. Chopp writes, "The concept of tradition has to broaden to include other kinds of historical witnesses than those authorized by ecclesial and theological elites and that tradition must be studied in its historical situatedness and its historical effects."³

¹ Rebecca S. Chopp, "Practical Theology and Liberation," in *Formation and Reflection: The Promise of Practical Theology*, ed. Lewis S. Mudge and James N. Poling (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 120.

² Chopp, 130.

³ Chopp, 130.

In an attempt to heed Chopp's warning, the following presentation of theory and literature cannot be limited to resources on homelessness written from a Christian perspective. By and large, such sources offer theological or Biblical reflection on homelessness that fail to take into account the voices and experiences of the homeless themselves. I cannot consider such sources to be liberative and, for these reasons, in alignment with Chopp's guidance to avoid hegemonic sources of authority, they are not included in this study. In addition, as the body of literature addressing pastoral care and counseling in the homeless context is severely limited, additional dialogue partners are required. I selected sources that recognize the complex factors contributing to homelessness rather than proffering easy answers such as deinstitutionalization or alcohol dependence. These sources do not view homelessness as a problem simply because it is a deviation from the status quo, and they do not advocate an understanding of the homeless as derelicts. As will be true in Chapter 4, the authors of the literature used are seeking the liberation of the homeless from systemic and personal oppression. Therefore, it is with great caution and attention to cultural relevancy that we now turn to examine the limited literature on pastoral care and counseling in the homeless context, as well as that within the disciplines of psychology and sociology. In Chapter 4 our dialogue partners expand to include sources of theological authority.

Pastoral Care and Counseling within the Homeless Context

In my review of the limited literature, two types of publications are present. First, similar to the literature in the wider discipline of Christianity and homelessness, journals such as *The Journal of Pastoral Care and Counseling* and *Pastoral Psychology*, as well as other edited volumes, have featured first-person accounts of caregivers working in the

homeless context that offer theological reflection and calls to action. The value of such articles is that by “witnessing” the homeless, such authors are able to identify issues of injustice and oppression and offer a compelling call to action. The spiritual component of homelessness is elevated. The reader begins to understand that for many “homelessness is also an experience of profound separation from God and communities of faith, and of struggles for deeper life meaning beyond what society can provide.”⁴ For others, spirituality had a profound impact on their ability to transcend their homeless circumstance. John R. Belcher, citing research he conducted with Greene et al., writes, “The respondents, all women, reported that faith/spirituality was what helped them to escape homelessness. The majority of the 15 respondents did not attend a formal church, however; they all reported that belief in God or a higher power gave them hope and a sense that ‘things would get better.’”⁵ Unfortunately, the voices of the homeless themselves are largely absent from this body of literature. Moreover, when they are included, they easily become objectified or otherized. Furthermore, although many of these resources note the systemic causes of homelessness, the implicit goal of some seems to be re-adopting the “have-nots” into the status quo rather than seeking true liberation by inducing the “haves” to share.⁶

Second are articles and books that aim to help congregations design and implement ministries of care for the homeless or to review existing ministries.⁷ In

⁴ Anne Streaty Wimberly, “Spiritual Care for the Homeless,” *Explor: A Journal of Theology* 9 (1988): 85.

⁵ John R. Belcher, “Helping the Homeless: What About the Spirit of God?” *Pastoral Psychology* 51, no. 3 (2003): 183, citing Jeanie Ahearn Greene, Kim Ball, John R. Belcher, Catherine McAlpine, “Substance Abuse, Homelessness, Developmental Decision-Making and Spirituality: A Women’s Health Issue,” *Journal of Social Work Practice in the Addictions* 3, no. 1(2003): 39-56.

⁶ See Wimberly.

⁷ See David C. Duncombe, “Street Ministry CPE: An Experiment in the Haight-Ashbury,” *Journal of Pastoral Care* 42, no. 4 (1988): 339-48; Patrick Logan, *A Life to be Lived: Homelessness and Pastoral*

addition to offering explicating the homeless context and why Christians are called to care, these resources offer explicit direction on ministry with the homeless. Whether offering ways treat the homeless as guests, handle disorderly conduct, retain volunteers, or communicate solidarity to the homeless, such resources offer step-by-step instruction in pastoral care that can be easily adopted to fit many church contexts.

In my review of the literature I was unable to identify a single source addressing pastoral counseling in the homeless context. One article entitled “Pastoral Counseling of the Homeless,” draws on Christian and Buddhist resources in order to help Shin Buddhist ministers working in the homeless context. Unfortunately, it considers ministries such as Habitat for Humanity pastoral counseling but does not employ a clinical understanding of counseling.⁸

Psychology⁹

The intersection of psychology and homelessness gained prominence in the 1980s following a significant spike in rates of homelessness. It was believed that the increase resulted from the deinstitutionalization of the mentally ill in accordance with the Mental Retardation Facilities and Community Mental Health Centers Construction Act passed in 1963. In 1984 the American Psychiatric Association created a task force to explore the treatment of homeless persons with severe mental illness. In addition, the National Institute of Mental Health funded ten studies between 1982 and 1986 to explore the intersection of homelessness and mental illness.¹⁰ Literature on homelessness from

Care (London: Darton, Longman and Todd in association with UNLEASH, 1989); and Charles F. Strobel, *Room in the Inn* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1992).

⁸ Joanne Mied, “Pastoral Counseling of the Homeless,” *Pure Land* 18-19 (2002): 223-68.

⁹ This section also includes literature in the discipline of clinical social work that draws upon psychological theory.

¹⁰ Deborah L. Dennis, John C. Buckner, Frank R. Lipton, and Irene S. Levine, “A Decade of Research and Services for Homeless Mentally Ill Persons,” *American Psychologist* 46 (1991): 1130.

psychology and psychiatry written in the 1980s focused almost exclusively on severe mental illness within the homeless population. By 1991, the American Psychological Association Council of Representatives approved a Resolution on Homelessness, stating that psychologists are uniquely suited to address the problem of homelessness for the following reasons: “the fact that shelter is a basic human need on which other developmental processes rest; homelessness disproportionately affects underserved groups with decreased access to basic resources; homelessness may be a precursor to, as well as a result of, various types of mental distress; and psychologists possess the needed knowledge and skills to act on behalf of this diverse population.”¹¹ The following review intentionally limits the amount of attention paid to literature addressing severe mental illness and focuses more broadly on the intersection of psychology and homelessness. From the substantial body of literature available, this presentation distinguishes theoretical literature from literature addressing clinical practice with homeless populations.

Research and Theory in Psychology

As previously mentioned, during the 1980s, a significant volume of research addressed homelessness and severe mental illness as common belief held that deinstitutionalization resulted in increased rates of homelessness in the U.S. According to several psychiatrists, among them H. Richard Lamb and Ellen L. Bassuk, inadequate structures were in place to care for the needs of the mentally ill following

¹¹ Kathleen M. Ingram, Alexandra F. Corning, and Lyle D. Schmidt, “The Relationship of Victimization Experiences to Psychological Well-Being among Homeless Women and Low-Income Housed Women,” *Journal of Counseling Psychology* 43 (1996): 218.

desinstitutionalization.¹² Decades later it remains true that adequate structures of care are still lacking; yet today there is significant debate regarding the extent to which deinstitutionalization and mental illness contribute to the increasing homeless population.¹³ Carl I. Cohen and Kenneth S. Thompson note a dearth of scientific evidence to support this theory. Thus, my review of the literature, in combination with my experience as a clinician, leads me to assert that systemic factors and structural injustices impact homeless persons both with and without mental health and, as will be shown, psychological theorists posit a variety of reasons for homelessness.

This review of the literature is presented with the assumption that homelessness is not a characterological defect – that is to say that homelessness is not due solely to individual deficits. The position that homelessness results from laziness or lack of motivation, or that only alcoholics are homeless, is simply false. According to Marcia B. Cohen, “There are clear political benefits to characterizing homelessness as reflective of individual rather than structural and societal inadequacies. This view shifts the responsibility for addressing the problem of homelessness from the government and places it squarely on the shoulders of homeless people.”¹⁴ Robert Desjarlais echoes this contention, stating that “newspapers and politicians have sometimes amplified these numbers to depict the homeless as a witless, alcoholic lot and redirect attention from the

¹² Ellen L. Bassuk and H. Richard Lamb, “Homelessness and the Implementation of Desinstitutionalization,” in *The Mental Health Needs of Homeless Persons*, ed. Ellen L. Bassuk (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1986); H. Richard Lamb, “Deinstitutionalization and the Homeless Mentally Ill,” *Hospital and Community Psychiatry* 35 (1984): 899-907.

¹³ Carl I. Cohen and Kenneth S. Thompson, “Homeless Mentally Ill or Mentally Ill Homeless?” *American Journal of Psychiatry* 149 (1992): 816-22.

¹⁴ Marcia B. Cohen, “Homeless People,” in *Handbook of Social Work Practice with Vulnerable and Resilient Populations*, ed. Alex Gitterman, 2nd ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 630.

economic and political factors that usually precipitate a lack of housing.”¹⁵ Therefore, by focusing on literature that recognizes the multifarious causes of homelessness, the following themes emerge: who are the homeless?; what are the causes of homelessness?; how do drugs and alcohol, abuse, and family and social relationships relate to homelessness?; and how does homelessness impact one’s identity, self-esteem, stress and feelings of mastery?

Who Are the Homeless?

Perhaps due to the debate regarding the impact of deinstitutionalization upon the homeless population, a portion of the literature within the discipline of psychology attempts to answer the question, “Who are the homeless?” Significant methodological problems arise in any attempt to gain an accurate representation of the number of homeless persons on any given night. While statistics are available on the number residing in shelters, it is simply impossible to count the number of individuals and families sleeping on the street, squatting in uninhabitable spaces, “doubling” or “tripling up, or living in their cars. Moreover, as most shelters are located in urban settings, the rural homeless simply are not counted. The National Coalition for the Homeless contends that “the best approximation is from a study done by the National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty which states that approximately 3.5 million people, 1.35 million of them children, are likely to experience homelessness in a given year (National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty, 2007).”¹⁶

¹⁵ Robert Desjarlais, *Shelter Blues: Sanity and Selfhood among the Homeless* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), 9.

¹⁶ National Coalition for the Homeless, “How Many People Experience Homelessness?” NCH Fact Sheet #2, July 2009, http://www.nationalhomeless.org/factsheets/How_Many.html (accessed December 15, 2009).

Based on such estimates, psychologists then attempt to determine what percentage of the homeless population suffers from mental illness. Debora L. Dennis, John C. Buckner, Frank R. Lipton, and Irene S. Levine contend that a review of the literature indicates a higher prevalence of mental illness in the homeless population than in the “domiciled” population.¹⁷ Cohen contends that “recent research estimates suggest that as few as 20 percent to 25 percent of homeless people have some form of severe and persistent mental illness.”¹⁸ However, according to the National Coalition for the Homeless, 16 percent of single adults in the homeless population suffer from a severe and persistent mental illness in contrast to 22 percent of the total American population.¹⁹

What accounts for the contradictory findings? Simply stated, methodological difficulties prevent psychologists from obtaining consistent results. Marybeth Shinn critiques researchers for making compromises in the way they select samples; for instance, random sampling with the homeless population is extremely difficult.²⁰ In addition, longitudinal studies also pose significant challenges, such as the difficulty of re-establishing contact with research partners when they lack a permanent address or phone number. According to Michael J. Vergare and A. Anthony Arce, homeless individuals frequently avoid participating in research as it is often experienced as intrusive.²¹ In addition, method and settings result in significant divergence of findings; for example, according to Vergare and Arce, research conducted on skid row often results in increased

¹⁷ Debora L. Dennis, John C. Buckner, Frank R. Lipton, and Irene S. Levine, “A Decade of Research and Services for Homeless Mentally Ill Persons,” *American Psychologist* 46 (1991): 1129-38.

¹⁸ Marcia B. Cohen, 633.

¹⁹ National Coalition for the Homeless, “Mental Illness and Homelessness,” NCH Fact Sheet #5, July 2009, http://www.nationalhomeless.org/factsheets/Mental_Illness.pdf (accessed December 15, 2009).

²⁰ Marybeth Shinn, “Homelessness: What is a Psychologist to Do?” *American Journal of Community Psychology* 20 (1992): 3.

²¹ Michael J. Vergare and A. Anthony Arce, “Homeless Adult Individuals and Their Shelter Networks,” in *The Mental Health Needs of Homeless Persons*, ed. Ellen L. Bassuk (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1986), 20.

rates of alcoholism in contrast to research conducted in emergency rooms, which results in increased rates of psychopathology.²² Diagnostic criteria are often unclear, especially regarding personality disorders, and therefore can result in overrepresentation and underrepresentation of particular diagnoses. According to Cohen, “Advocacy groups have suggested that serious methodological errors and definitional problems have led to exaggerated reports of the size and composition of” the homeless.²³

In addition to biases that result from methodological difficulties, reports on the percentage of the homeless population suffering from mental illness often only report on homeless singles. According to The National Coalition for the Homeless, a larger percentage of homeless singles are considered mentally ill in contrast to homeless individuals with children in the household.²⁴ Marybeth Shinn conducted research comparing “housed families” and “shelter requesters” in New York City and concluded that one percent of housed family members and four percent of shelter requesters reported prior mental hospitalizations. According to Shinn, the likelihood of mental hospitalization is similar in both populations due to the fact that raising children during homelessness requires a rather high level of functioning. As one service provider put it, “you have to be pretty together to hold onto your kids through an episode of homelessness.”²⁵ Therefore, research does not adequately investigate the varying rates and impact of mental illness upon diverse homeless populations.

Amidst the discussion of increasing rates of homelessness it is important to note that homelessness is not a new phenomenon. Homelessness in America’s New England

²² Vergare and Arce, 21.

²³ Marcia B. Cohen, 633.

²⁴ National Coalition for the Homeless, “How Many People Experience Homelessness?”.

²⁵ Shinn, “Homelessness,” 14.

dates back to the seventeenth century. During the nineteenth century, homeless women, families, and orphaned children were known as the “wandering poor.”²⁶ Despite a significant population of homeless families in the 1930s, the twentieth century tended to view homelessness as a “male” epidemic. The U.S. Conference of Mayors estimated that in 2006 single men comprise only 51 percent of the total homeless population.²⁷ Increasing numbers of women, families, and unattached youth are joining the homeless population. The population is increasingly diverse, including a cohort of runaway youth who identify as LGBTQ.²⁸ Bassuk refers to the increasing number of homeless women as the “feminization of homelessness.” She notes that the demographic composition of homelessness has changed significantly since the 1970s,²⁹ with female-headed families comprising one of the fastest-growing cohorts within the homeless population.³⁰ Bassuk and Cohen concur that the increased number of homeless women and families results from “the combined effects of poverty, violence, and profound deprivation on a person’s development and self-esteem,” as well as a dwindling supply of affordable housing and cuts to federal aid programs.³¹ Rebecca Koch, Mary T. Lewis and Wendy Quiñones write, “Mothers and their families are nearly 40% of the homeless in America, a growth of 10% since 1985 and a larger proportion than at any time since the Great Depression.”³² Male veterans are also disproportionately represented within the homeless population, but

²⁶ Marcia B. Cohen, 628.

²⁷ National Coalition for the Homeless, “How Many People Experience Homelessness?”.

²⁸ Teresa DeCrescenzo, *Helping Gay and Lesbian Youth: New Policies, New Programs, New Practice* (New York: Haworth, 1994).

²⁹ Ellen L. Bassuk, “Homeless Families: Single Mothers and Their Children in Boston Shelters,” in *The Mental Health Needs of Homeless Persons*, ed. Ellen L. Bassuk (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1986), 45.

³⁰ Marcia B. Cohen, 631.

³¹ Marcia B. Cohen, 632; Bassuk, “Homeless Families,” 46.

³² Rebecca Koch, Mary T. Lewis, and Wendy Quiñones, “Homeless: Mothering at Rock Bottom,” in *Mothering Against the Odds: Diverse Voices of Contemporary Mothers*, ed. Cynthia T. Garcia Coll, Janet L. Surrey, and Kathy Weingarten Surrey (New York: Guilford, 1998), 64.

not by as much as is popularly assumed. According to Cohen, veterans comprise about 34 percent of the general adult male population and about 40 percent of the homeless male population.³³ Lastly, “the homeless population is estimated to be 42 percent African American, 39 percent white, 13 percent Hispanic, 4 percent Native American and 2 percent Asian.”³⁴ As is apparent in the above racial breakdown, African Americans and Hispanics are disproportionately represented within the homeless population. Our House reflects this disproportionate percentage of persons of color as the vast majority of residents are either African American or Hispanic American, which is evidenced in the sample population.

Given the increasing percentage of homeless women, children, and families, it is interesting to examine the differences between homeless and poor housed families. In her individual research, as well as in a study with Knickman and Weitzman, Shinn compared 700 families in New York City who had requested shelter to 524 families receiving public assistance/welfare.³⁵ In contradiction to their initial hypotheses, the researchers discovered that homeless families were more likely to receive assistance and be in contact with their social networks compared to poor housed families.³⁶ Both populations reported similar rates of mental hospitalization and drug rehabilitation. However, the mothers of homeless families were younger, more likely to be pregnant, and more likely to have experienced abuse by a male partner or have a history of child abuse.³⁷ More will be said later about how such experiences relate to homelessness, but for now it is

³³ Marcia B. Cohen, 632.

³⁴ National Coalition for the Homeless, “How Many People Experience Homelessness?”

³⁵ Shinn, “Homelessness”; Marybeth Shinn, James R. Knickman, and Beth C. Weitzman, “Social Relationships and Vulnerability to Becoming Homeless among Poor Families,” *American Psychologist* 46 (1991): 1180-87.

³⁶ Shinn, “Homelessness,” 15.

³⁷ Shinn, “Homelessness,” 17-18.

important to note that, according to Shinn et al., poor social ties, mental illness, and drug addiction, three factors commonly believed to cause homelessness, do not account for the difference between homeless and poor housed families.

Finally, according to Vergare and Arce, it is helpful to consider the duration of one's homelessness. Therefore, the authors divide the overall homeless population into three groups: those who are chronically homeless, episodically homeless, and situationally homeless.³⁸ Whereas the chronically homeless are without permanent shelter for years, the episodically homeless are part of a "revolving door" phenomenon in which they vacillate between periods of homelessness and periods of shelter. A further distinction is the situationally homeless whose homelessness is an isolated incidence of shorter duration. Our research partners reflect these three groups: Wrakishia was homeless for over five years, while Crystal was homeless for only around 100 days and secured her own apartment after her residency at Our House. Yet, the majority of residents fall somewhere in between and are best categorized as episodically homeless. While such designations are made based upon the duration of one's homelessness, understanding the chronicity of each person's or family's homelessness helps mental health providers determine appropriate therapeutic interventions. More will be said about this when we examine the work of Thomas L. Kuhlman.

What Are the Causes of Homelessness?

As previously mentioned, literature from the 1980s attributes significant causation of homelessness to deinstitutionalization and severe mental illness. It is the author's contention that as an ecological perspective gained greater acceptance in the discipline of psychology, theorists and researchers alike began to deconstruct such oversimplified

³⁸ Vergare and Arce, 17.

understandings of the causes of homelessness. Paul A. Toro, Edison J. Trickett, David D. Wall, and Deborah A. Salem contend that “homelessness is now recognized as a complex and multifaceted phenomenon involving broad social policies, economic shifts, service system deficiencies, disruptions in social support, and individual and family differences in access to resources and coping styles.”³⁹ Therefore, we now turn to examine how the literature addresses the causes of homelessness, including an inquiry into self-reported reasons for homelessness.

Shinn examines the causes of homelessness and identifies a dichotomy in the literature between person-centered and structural approaches. Shinn contends that psychologists writing from a person-centered approach tend to attribute homelessness to “rate of substance abuse and psychiatric impairment ... inadequate social networks or poor educational and employment histories.”⁴⁰ The person-centered approach focuses on individual problems and fails to account for structural factors, such as increases in poverty and decreases in the number of affordable housing units. In an effort to illustrate the structural perspective on homelessness, Shinn borrows the following analogy from McChesney: “Homelessness ... is like a game of musical chairs. The players are low-income households. The chairs are the housing units they can afford. If there are more low-income households than affordable housing units, some households will be left homeless when the music stops.”⁴¹ Therefore, individual deficits may lead one to be vulnerable to homelessness, but homelessness is undeniably exacerbated by structural inadequacies. Much of the literature attempts to demonstrate how poverty has increased

³⁹ Paul A. Toro, Edison J. Trickett, David D. Wall and Deborah A. Salem, “Homelessness in the United States: An Ecological Perspective,” *American Psychologist* 46 (1991): 1208.

⁴⁰ Shinn, “Homelessness,” 2.

⁴¹ Shinn, “Homelessness,” 2.

and affordable housing has decreased and to exemplify the deleterious effects of cuts in public assistance. Cohen writes, “The causes of homelessness were bitterly debated during the 1980s. More recently, all but the most conservative social scientists have agreed on at least three interrelated causes: eroding work opportunities, cuts in public benefit programs, and the shortage of affordable housing.”⁴²

While it is evident that a paradigm shift occurred within the discipline of psychology regarding perceived causes of homelessness, Richard Tessler, Robert Rosenheck, and Gail Gamache conducted a study demonstrating self-reported reasons for homelessness and variation in gender differences.⁴³ Tessler et al. interviewed 7,224 homeless adults who qualified for mental health case management services through the U.S. Center for Mental Health Services’ Access to Community Care and Effective Services and Supports (ACCESS) program.⁴⁴ The authors predicted that men would be more likely to attribute their homelessness to substance abuse, while women would be more likely to report interpersonal reasons. In addition, the authors hypothesized that both genders would equally report economic factors. Their findings supported their initial hypotheses, as the main reasons for homelessness reported by men included loss of a job, discharge from an institution, mental health problems, and alcohol or drug problems, and women cited “eviction, interpersonal conflict, and someone no longer able or willing to help.”⁴⁵ When both genders are combined, “33% cited mental problems, alcohol or drug problems, or both (ADM); 30% cited interpersonal conflict, someone no longer able or willing to help or both (Interpersonal); 21% cited loss of a job, lost income, increased

⁴² Marcia B. Cohen, 630.

⁴³ Richard Tessler, Robert Rosenheck, and Gail Gamache, “Gender Differences in Self-Reported Reasons for Homelessness,” *Journal of Social Distress and the Homeless* 10 (2001): 243-54.

⁴⁴ Tessler et al., 245.

⁴⁵ Tessler et al., 248.

expenses, or eviction (Economic); and 16% cited Other reasons.”⁴⁶ The import of this study is two-fold: first, it illustrates how, at least within this sample population, persons with some degree of mental illness who are currently experiencing homelessness are unlikely to recognize the structural causes for their circumstance; second, it helps clinicians working with homeless men and women to recognize how perceived causes of homelessness may differ according to gender and to tailor one’s therapeutic approach. Although their research focused solely on men residing in the Skid Row area of Los Angeles, Rodger K. Farr, Paul Koegel, and Audrey Burnam report that 53.4 percent of individuals cite lack of money and 48.9 percent cite lack of job as the explanation for their homelessness.⁴⁷

Research partners attributed their own homelessness to legal difficulties, finances, drug use, eviction, strained or severed relationships, and the economy and/or unemployment. Because of the weak economy and high unemployment at the time of this study, research partners readily identified such systemic causes as reasons for homelessness. Yet they did not articulate how systemic factors relate to the other five reasons stated. For example, Anthony noted relational problems with his sister following his release from prison, as well as his wife’s drug use, but spoke of these as personal rather than systemic problems. Though absent from the literature, it is quite possible that there are structural antecedents to many individual deficits. Unfortunately, the proponents of the structural approach fail to consider the probable complex interplay between the individual and systemic factors of homelessness. Therefore, while the reasons for

⁴⁶ Tessler et al., 248.

⁴⁷ Rodger K. Farr, Paul Koegel, and Audrey Burnam. *A Study of Homelessness and Mental Illness in the Skid Row Area of Los Angeles* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health, 1986), 182.

homelessness cited by the research partners support the above literature, counselors can aid residents by helping them to understand how personal and systemic factors become interwoven. More will be said on this in Chapter 5.

How Do Drugs and Alcohol Relate to Homelessness?

Both mental illness and drug and alcohol abuse are common scapegoats as causes of homelessness when homelessness is understood as a characterological deficit. For homeless and housed individuals alike, substance abuse often accompanies a mental health diagnosis. Therefore, when statistics are presented, such as the data that 33 percent of homeless persons have a substance abuse disorder and 20 to 25 percent have a severe mental health disorder, this is often an overlapping population of individuals with dual-diagnoses. In their research examining the Skid Row area of Los Angeles, Farr et al. contend that “as many as 12% of the individuals in this sample have dual diagnoses of chronic mental illness and chronic substance abuse.”⁴⁸ According to the authors, treatment of individuals with dual-diagnoses requires specialized professionals trained to address both problems concurrently. While it is difficult to determine exactly what percentage of the homeless population suffers from drug or alcohol addiction, it is essential to note that alcohol and/or drug abuse can be both a contributing factor and a result of homelessness. According to the National Coalition for the Homeless, individuals struggling against both addiction and poverty are at increased risk for homelessness.⁴⁹ While the bottom line remains that most addicts do not become homeless, the duration of homelessness is often greater for individuals battling addiction, making addiction more prevalent among the chronically homeless. Johnson and Lee advocate, “Whether or not

⁴⁸ Farr et al., xiii.

⁴⁹ National Coalition for the Homeless, “Substance Abuse and Homelessness,” NCH Fact Sheet #6, July 2009, <http://www.nationalhomeless.org/factsheets/addiction.html> (accessed December 15, 2009).

one can establish chicken-and-egg relationships and multiple causality, the fact remains that any political-clinical response to homelessness must provide for treatment of addiction.”⁵⁰

In Chapter 2 research partners shared how, for some, drugs and alcohol were a cause of homelessness and for many they negatively impacted their period of residence in the shelter. While only one of the sixteen research partners reported using drugs while in the shelter, they readily noted use and abuse by other residents. As we heard from Martha, she maintained her sobriety but not without significant struggle and she lacked the childcare needed to attend NA. Upon entering the shelter, residents consent to random drug testing although I recall only two instances in which such tests were administered. For the safety of all residents, shelter staff may benefit from further drug and alcohol training in order to refer addicted residents to programs that are able to meet adequately their needs, while keeping the shelter substance-free for the benefit of all.

How Does Abuse Relate to Homelessness?

Research indicates a significant correlation between past and present abuse and homelessness. Ronnie F. Ryback and Ellen L. Bassuk note a study in which 33 percent of 51 women residing in a Boston family shelter had been involved in an abusive relationship.⁵¹ Two additional studies comparing poor housed mothers to homeless mothers found that homeless mothers are more likely to have experienced abuse as a child and to be battered as an adult.⁵² Shinn, Knickman and Weitzman also compared

⁵⁰ Alice K. Johnson and Judith A. B. Lee, “Empowerment Work with Homeless Women,” in *Women in Context: Toward a Feminist Reconstruction of Psychotherapy*, ed. Marsha Pravder Mirkin (New York: Guilford, 1994), 420.

⁵¹ Ronnie F. Ryback and Ellen L. Bassuk, “Homeless Battered Women and Their Shelter Network,” in *The Mental Health Needs of Homeless Persons*, ed. Ellen L. Bassuk (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1986), 56.

⁵² Ellen L. Bassuk and Lynn Rosenberg, “Why Does Family Homelessness Occur?: A Case-Control Study,” *American Journal of Public Health* 78 (1988): 783-88; David Wood, R. Burciaga Valdez, Toshi

poor housed families to homeless families regarding their histories of traumatic childhood experiences, including living in a foster home or group home, running away from home for more than a week, being homeless, and experiencing physical and/or sexual abuse. Shinn et al. report that shelter requesters were three times more likely than poor housed women to have experienced childhood trauma. Twenty-seven percent of shelter requesters had experienced physical abuse or been threatened with violence as an adult in contrast to 16.6 percent of the poor housed population.⁵³ Similar findings are replicated in various studies, including research conducted by Ann D’Ercole and Elmer Struening, reporting that 31 percent of women in a single-adult shelter in New York City were victims of child molestation; 63 percent were battered as adults; 51 percent were attacked with a weapon; and 58 percent had been raped.⁵⁴ In a 1988 survey conducted by HUD, they determined that about one-half of adult heads of homeless families are victims of domestic violence compared to about one-fifth of single homeless adults.⁵⁵ According to Felix and Samuels, “Risk factors associated with homelessness for families include abuse and separation from the original family in childhood, domestic violence in adulthood, mental health hospitalization in the last 2 years, and abuse of alcohol or heroin.”⁵⁶ Milburn and D’Ercole note the following: “Family violence may, in part, cause social isolation among poor women, and that isolation then creates a vulnerability to becoming homeless. Moreover, because strong relationships during adulthood require a

Hayashi, and Albert Shen, “Homeless and Housed Families in Los Angeles: A Study Comparing Demographic, Economic and Family Function Characteristics,” *American Journal of Public Health* 80 (1990): 1049-52.

⁵³ Shinn et al., “Social Relationships,” 1184-85.

⁵⁴ Ann D’Ercole and Elmer Struening, “Victimization among Homeless Women: Implications for Service Delivery,” *Journal of Community Psychology* 28 (1990): 141-52.

⁵⁵ Johnson and Lee, 413.

⁵⁶ Alan Felix and Judith Samuels, “Families in Shelters,” in *Clinical Guide to the Treatment of the Mentally Ill Homeless Person*, ed. Paulette Marie Gillig and Hunter L. McQuiston (Washington DC: American Psychiatric Pub., 2006), 36.

capacity for attachment and trust that is built early in life, the interpersonal experiences of homeless women suggest that early abuse may severely limit or foreclose future positive interpersonal relationships (Ainsworth, 1982; Bowlby, 1988).”⁵⁷ Therefore, it is evident that victimization increases women’s vulnerability to homelessness.

The experiences of research partners reflect a high incidence of abuse among the homeless. Briteny explicitly stated that she came to the shelter to escape an abusive romantic relationship. Through both interviews and the provision of counseling services, I am aware that at least ten of the sixteen research partners experienced physical abuse as a child and/or an adult. As such abusive experiences often cause survivors to experience difficulty forming trusting relationships, it is essential that pastoral counselors demonstrate a caring and open demeanor and attempt to enact equity in the relationship. We will return to this topic in our call for revised praxis in Chapter 5.

How Do Family and Social Relationships Relate to Homelessness?

Most of us know from personal experience that social support helps to mediate stressful circumstances. Therefore, according to Farr et al., “When people stop to question how an individual can become homeless, the first question which usually enters their mind centers around families and friends, for it seems unfathomable that one could have family and friends and still end up with no place to stay.”⁵⁸ In fact, several studies indicate that homeless adults have inadequate social networks.⁵⁹ According to Dennis et al., the homeless mentally ill report more incidence of estrangement from their families

⁵⁷ Norweeta Milburn and Ann D’Ercole, “Homeless Women: Moving Toward a Comprehensive Model,” *American Psychologist* 46 (1991): 1164.

⁵⁸ Farr et al., 220.

⁵⁹ Farr, Koegel, and Burnam; Shinn, Knickman and Weitzman.

of origin, decreased contact with relatives, and feelings of detachment.⁶⁰ Bassuk, in her research with single mothers and their children in Boston shelters, reports that when asked to describe three sources of support, 25 percent cited their children and another 25 percent were unable to cite even one supportive relationship.⁶¹ However, contradicting research reports also indicate that many homeless individuals and families receive help from family or friends prior to becoming homeless. How can we account for such discrepancies?⁶²

According to Shinn, Knickman, and Weitzman, “Social relationships may be linked to homelessness by several paths. Members of a social network might offer material help in finding or maintaining housing, or might provide emotional support to bolster the family’s coping resources. Alternately, they might precipitate homelessness by making a living situation untenable. Negative relationships may deplete families’ coping resources or deter them from obtaining needed support.”⁶³ Therefore, in their own review of the literature, Shinn, Knickman, and Weitzman purport that the majority of research regarding social ties and homelessness sampled cross-sections of the homeless population as opposed to the recently homeless, making it difficult to determine if poor social ties are causal or correlative. Thus, they embarked on their own research with the hypothesis that poor social ties impacts families’ vulnerability to homelessness and concluded that, in contrast to housed families, homeless families had seen friends and family more recently and reported a greater number of members in their support

⁶⁰ Dennis et al., 1131.

⁶¹ Bassuk, “Homeless Families,” 49.

⁶² It is also important to note that research often focuses exclusively on one subpopulation – for instance, homeless families or homeless individuals with mental illness. Therefore, further research is needed to determine how such subpopulations differ.

⁶³ Shinn et al., “Social Relationships,” 1180.

networks.⁶⁴ In addition, more than 75 percent of homeless families had “doubled up” with family or friends during the past year and more than 33 percent had received financial support toward rent costs.⁶⁵ However, most reported that they had overstayed their welcome or utilized all available resources.

Irene S. Levine, Anne D. Lezak and Howard H. Goldman examine the social supports of the mentally ill homeless and draw similar conclusions, stating that it is possible that while social ties may exist, it is often easy to exhaust resources or alienate supportive friends and family.⁶⁶ Finally, writing from an ecological perspective on homelessness, Toro, Trickett, Wall, and Salem also note the complex nature of social support. They report that while numerous studies suggest that homeless individuals do possess social ties, “doubling up” is cited as a path to homelessness and therefore puts all parties at risk. In addition, Toro et al. note that informal relationships may also serve as sources of support, such as “the storekeeper, the cop on the beat, or the bartender who provides a place to rest or a listening” ear.⁶⁷ Therefore, it is likely that poor social ties and inadequate support systems are just as likely to be a consequence of homelessness as a cause. While at least seven of the sixteen research partners did stay with family or friends prior to their shelter residency and, as we heard, some did outstay their welcome, strained or severed relationships were noted as a cause of homelessness. We also know that many research partners did not feel that they had adequate support networks. Therefore,

⁶⁴ Shinn et al., “Social Relationships,” 1183.

⁶⁵ Shinn et al., “Social Relationships,” 1184.

⁶⁶ Irene Shifren Levine, Anne D. Lezak, and Howard H. Goldman, “Community Support Systems for the Homeless Mentally Ill,” in *The Mental Health Needs of Homeless Persons*, ed. Ellen L. Bassuk (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1986), 28.

⁶⁷ Toro et al., 1212.

research partners' reports support the notion that poor support networks and weakened or nonexistent social ties may be both a cause and a result of homelessness.

How Does Homelessness Impact One's Identity?

It should not be difficult to imagine that homelessness is accompanied by significant emotional difficulties and can dramatically impact one's sense of self.⁶⁸ The tenuousness and insecurities of homelessness are enough in themselves to cause emotional distress, but stigmatizing societal attitudes that portray the homeless as criminals or lazy compound the emotional turmoil of homelessness. Milburn and D'Ercole note the negative impact of societal attitudes on women's ability to cope. They write, "The social stigma of homelessness, with its inherent attribution of personal rather than societal failure, may add another obstacle for women trying to cope and extricate themselves from this extremely stressful situation. Homeless women may be stereotyped as vagrant, mentally ill, or substance abusers, and their homeless status may be attributed by the broader community to a personal flaw or weakness."⁶⁹ Furthermore, according to Cohen, homelessness is often a period of profound loss. In addition to losing housing, "homeless people lose possessions, neighborhood, family ties, customary roles, status, daily routine, privacy, and the ability to maintain or secure employment."⁷⁰ Such losses can lead to self-questioning and doubts about one's identity.

Thomas L. Kuhlman utilizes the theory of Hans Selye to formulate a conception of the three "stages" of homelessness. In accordance to Selye's rubric, the first stage is the alarm stage in which homelessness is experienced as an acute crisis and the individual

⁶⁸ The topic of depression among the homeless will be explored in the review of the literature addressing homelessness from a sociological perspective.

⁶⁹ Milburn and D'Ercole, 1167.

⁷⁰ Marcia B. Cohen, 635.

often does not hesitate to seek mental health services. During the alarm stage the individual feels distanced and distinct from homelessness and often does not hesitate to receive mental health services. According to Kuhlman, “Such a person’s request for help from the practitioner often includes an unsolicited assertion as to how ‘I’m not one of them.’”⁷¹ This is most clearly illustrated by LaToya’s comment that she and her fellow shelter residents were the most “unhomeless homeless.” She felt that being homeless was a negative and said, “Like I never really say that about myself, but just being that.” The second stage is the resistance stage in which one’s self-esteem begins to deteriorate as dependence on service-providers becomes requisite and it becomes nearly impossible to distance oneself from the realities of the homeless experience. This was evidenced when Jennifer, in reference to the shelter staff, stated, “They talk to you like you’re homeless. Like you need us. And we do need them.” Finally, the third stage is the exhaustion stage. According to Kuhlman, “‘Street person’ is now accepted as one’s identity. The emotional reactivity that characterizes the first two stages is blunted among these persons, emotions having become superfluous distractions from the numbing routine of survival tasks to be practiced every day.”⁷² The third stage is often referred to as shelterization and includes “passivity, dependence [and] apathy.”⁷³ Wrakishia exhibits the third stage when, in a laconic manner, she stated, “Pillow to pillow. For five years.” These three stages illustrate changes in one’s identity as well as behavior.

David A. Snow and Leon Anderson also address the concept of identity within the homeless context by exploring how homeless individuals maintain and generate identities

⁷¹ Thomas L. Kuhlman, *Psychology on the Streets: Mental Health Practice with Homeless Persons* (New York: J. Wiley and Sons, 1994), 13.

⁷² Kuhlman, 15.

⁷³ Kuhlman, 15.

that enhance their sense of self-worth. By “hanging out” with homeless individuals in a variety of settings across five major cities, Snow and Anderson observed three generic patterns in the way that homeless individuals talk about their self-identities. First, a significant amount of the “identity talk” is focused on distancing – maintaining one’s own identity by disassociating with other homeless individuals, particular groups within the larger homeless population, or certain roles and institutions.⁷⁴ Snow and Anderson report that 75 percent of individuals who have been homeless for less than six months experience categorical distancing in which they differentiate themselves from homelessness in general and street role identities such as bum, tramp, drifter, even “homeless.”⁷⁵ They are the “unhomeless homeless.” In their research with homeless women, Ingram, Corning and Schmidt also observed distancing identity talk. They report, “Approximately 14% of the participants who were living in homeless shelters did not consider themselves ever to have been homeless. Several women told the researchers that they did not view themselves as homeless because they were not living in the street.”⁷⁶

The second emerging pattern is embracement, a concept derived from sociologist Erving Goffman. This identity talk provides the homeless individual with a niche in which his identity is accepted – for example identifying as a bum or “expert dumpster diver.”⁷⁷ And, as one would assume, Snow and Anderson found that the longer one resides on the street the greater the prevalence of categorical embracement in his or her identity talk. I am unable to identify any research partners engaging in embracement.

⁷⁴ David A. Snow and Leon Anderson, “Identity Work among the Homeless: The Verbal Construction and Avowal of Personal Identities,” *American Journal of Sociology* 92 (1987): 1349.

⁷⁵ Snow and Anderson, 1353.

⁷⁶ Ingram, Corning, and Schmidt, 226.

⁷⁷ Snow and Anderson, 1355.

Finally, the third pattern is fictive storytelling. This involves relaying stories of the past, present or future in a way that embellishes or fantasizes. Snow and Anderson's research is significant in that it demonstrates how duration of homeless identity impacts both distancing and embracement, as well as the tendency of homeless individuals to engage in fictive storytelling as a means of generating positive identity. However, of greater interest is the authors' conclusion that because people literally living on the street regularly engage in "identity talk," conversations regarding one's identity need not be contingent on the satisfaction of physical needs. Simply stated, homeless individuals are generating identities whether they sleep on the streets, in a shelter, or in a home. But, as previously noted, such identities are generated in dialogue with society's stigmatizing beliefs and treatment. The longer shelter residents are able to identify as more than homeless, the greater their drive to transcend the homeless circumstance. This fact has significant implications for the practice of pastoral care and counseling with homeless individuals and families, which will be discussed in Chapter 5.

How Does Homelessness Impact One's Self-Esteem?

Snow and Anderson's study evidences how ongoing identity work, and changes in self-identity, must occur for homeless individuals to maintain a sense of self in the face of their circumstance. For this reason, it should be understandable that homelessness often negatively impacts one's self-esteem. As noted above, homelessness is often a time of loss – loss of structure, self-governance, community, and other self-defining associations. According to Bassuk, "Poverty erodes a person's self-esteem and confidence and creates feelings of despair and alienation."⁷⁸ According to the literature, one way in which self-esteem can be maintained during homelessness is by increasing one's agency or

⁷⁸ Bassuk, "Homeless Families," 51.

developing a sense of mastery to mitigate the negative impacts of stress and increase self-esteem. Therefore, we now turn to examine the particular stressors faced by the homeless and how a sense of mastery can mediate stress and deteriorating self-esteem.

How Does Homelessness Impact Stress and Feelings of Mastery?

Manual Muñoz, Carmelo Vazquez, Marta Bermajo and Jose Juan Vazquez attempted to determine the relationship between stress and homelessness by determining the quantity and nature of stressors experienced by those who are homeless, what stressors occurred immediately prior to becoming homeless, and the perceptions of such stressors according to the homeless.⁷⁹ In order to determine when the stressful life events (SLEs) occurred, the researchers examined three periods: more than two years prior to the first homelessness episode; between two years before and one year after the first homelessness episode, and more than one year after the first homelessness episode.⁸⁰ The lowest percentage (16) of SLEs occurred more than one year following the first episode of homelessness and the highest percentage (45) occurred more than two years prior. In addition, the majority of SLEs were economic in nature, including unemployment. Only five of the sixteen research partners, however, mentioned financial antecedents to their homelessness, while six referenced being fired or laid off prior to their homelessness. In contrast, fourteen of the sixteen research partners mentioned strained or severed relationships. Therefore, research partners in this study more often noted SLEs included in Muñoz's et al. second category. Health problems, such as the death of an immediate family member, child, partner or close friend, or alcohol abuse, comprise the second

⁷⁹ Manual Muñoz, Carmelo Vazquez, Marta Bermejo, and Jose Juan Vazquez, "Stressful Life Events Among Homeless People: Quantity, Types, Timing, and Perceived Causality," *Journal of Community Psychology* 27 (1999): 73-87.

⁸⁰ Muñoz et al., 78.

largest category of SLEs. Nearly two thirds of the respondents reported that they “felt alone and abandoned.”⁸¹ The respondents also indicated that while economics were perceived to be the probable cause of their homelessness, mental illness, death of a friend or family member, and feelings of loneliness were considered almost as causative. This is evidenced in the grief expressed by both Lisa and Crystal, Jennifer’s postpartum depression, and LaToya’s extreme isolation. According to the authors, “When those interviewed placed their SLEs on a timeline with their first episode of homelessness, the majority of these events (a mean of eight) occurred *before* or *during* their transition to homelessness.”⁸² This corroborates with the respondents at Our House who reported feeling “broken” upon entering the shelter.

Milburn and D’Ercole also examine the impact of stress on women’s experience of homelessness. By understanding stress as a transactional and relational process, Milburn and D’Ercole examined how residential instability, poverty, employment problems, and victimization function as risk factors for homelessness in women’s lives.⁸³ First, the authors cite various studies demonstrating ongoing residential instability in the lives of women, bouncing from one family member’s home to the next, doubling up with friends, experiencing evictions and even disasters such as hurricanes and house fires.⁸⁴ Second, although reports vary regarding the number of homeless women receiving public assistance, there is no doubt that most homeless women are in poverty. When housed, presently homeless families are more likely to have spent a larger portion of their income on rent. Milburn and D’Ercole write

⁸¹ Muñoz et al., 78.

⁸² Muñoz et al., 82.

⁸³ Milburn and D’Ercole, 1162.

⁸⁴ Milburn and D’Ercole’s research focuses only on women; however, it would be interesting to compare differences in residential instability between women and men.

Being poor virtually assures a life of chronic hassles, such as having to spend most of one's income on necessities, including housing, food, and clothing, and having little or no discretionary money; having to rely solely on public transportation to get from one place to another; having to spend a great deal of time in high crime areas and so forth. These chronic hassles contribute to the detrimental impact of poverty on psychological well-being and health.⁸⁵

Third, unemployment causes stress, and homeless women are more likely than homeless men to have been unemployed. Securing and maintaining employment is difficult for homeless women as they are often single mothers and very few jobs provide maternity or child care benefits that make it feasible for mothers to work. The authors note that anecdotal evidence suggests that homeless mothers are often only able to secure employment that is lower in status and paid "under the table." This may result in lowered self-esteem and decrease women's abilities to cope with other stressors.⁸⁶ In addition, it forces women into tax evasion. Finally, as previously noted, homeless women are more likely to have experienced abuse as a child or battery as an adult. This complicates adult relationships, making it difficult to develop trust and attachment.

Based on these four major stressors, the authors argue that social support and coping are the two greatest mediators to stressors in the lives of homeless women. As previously mentioned, research regarding social ties in the lives of the homeless is quite contradictory. Milburn and D'Ercole note that social support can be "used up." However, the authors assert that children can serve both as a stressor and as a support in the lives of homeless mothers. For instance, women with children residing in family shelters are less likely to have been hospitalized for mental illness, yet many shelters have unofficial policies not to hospitalize women with children in their care. Recall Briteny's comment

⁸⁵ Milburn and D'Ercole, 1163.

⁸⁶ Milburn and D'Ercole, 1164.

about crying on the shoulder of her two year old daughter. In addition, issues of custody also impact women's ability to cope. The authors note that more research is necessary to understand homeless parenting, an aspect of homelessness that based on research partners' comments seems to function as a significant stressor.

A second mediator to stress in the lives of homeless women is coping. This leads us to examine how a sense of mastery can mediate stressors and prevent diminished self-esteem. First, Milburn and D'Ercole understand coping to be an individual's ability to reframe stressful circumstances in a way that lessens the perceived threat and increases one's perceived ability to manage. According to the authors, "If a woman feels that she has no control over a stressful event, she is more likely to adopt an avoidant or palliative coping strategy, especially if it is a chronic stressor such as spouse abuse or homelessness."⁸⁷ Muñoz et al. echo this assertion. Citing research by Burns, Muñoz et al. write, "In the specific case of the homeless, the perceived degree of control over, or attribution of fault to, SLEs plays an important role in the prolonging of homelessness."⁸⁸ We will return to this topic later when examining the importance of empowerment in both individual and group counseling services with homeless individuals.

Clinical Practice

This section presents an overview of the literature addressing clinical practice with persons experiencing homelessness. Therapeutic approaches vary widely depending on the context. For example, some psychologists visit drop-in centers and begin establishing rapport with homeless clients by hanging out and thus recruiting clients for

⁸⁷ Milburn and D'Ercole, 1167.

⁸⁸ Muñoz et al., 74.

individual therapy.⁸⁹ Counseling may also be offered or required as a component of case management or shelter programs. Levine, Lezak and Goldman, citing the need for diverse counseling contexts, write, “Far too often, we unsuccessfully attempt to make our patients conform to our service system rather than modify our system.”⁹⁰ Regardless of the context, the literature stresses the fact that material needs are essential for those experiencing homelessness and that “mental health care providers must be viewed as working toward the goals of the homeless – obtaining the basic needs of food, clothing, shelter and companionship.”⁹¹ According to Milburn and Curry, this may be especially important with ethnic minority homeless adults who, according to their research, are more interested in meeting basic needs such as food, clothing and shelter than physical and mental health care.⁹² While such a contention risks feeding stereotypes, this dynamic, according to the authors, is fueled by racial and class discrimination on the part of service providers which decreases minorities’ access to such basic needs. Marybeth Shinn echoes the need for mental health treatment in combination with other resources and warns therapists that “we should not assume that all homeless people need any particular service other than housing.”⁹³ Therefore, the therapist must be part of a team working to address the holistic needs of the individual or family, which lessens the

⁸⁹ Dennis et al. 1133.

⁹⁰ Levine, Lezak and Goldman, 32.

⁹¹ Neil Falk, “General Concepts of Outreach and Engagement,” in *Clinical Guide to the Treatment of the Mentally Ill Homeless Person*, ed. Paulette Marie Gillig and Hunter L. McQuistion (Washington DC: American Psychiatric Pub., 2006), 10.

⁹² Norweeta G. Milburn and Terrlyn L. Curry, “Intervention and Treatment for Ethnic Minority Homeless Adults,” in *Psychological Interventions and Cultural Diversity*, ed. Joseph F. Aponte, Robin Young Rivers, and Julian Wohl (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1995), 257.

⁹³ Shinn, “Homelessness,” 21.

burden on the therapist.⁹⁴ This contention resonates with my own clinical experience as it can be overwhelming to work with populations whose needs are so great and resources so few. A collaborative approach allows the counselor to focus more directly on the client's psychospiritual needs while trusting that her various other needs are met by fellow team members. With an understanding that therapy with the homeless is best received as one of many services, the next section addresses the following themes found in the literature: the practice of appointment setting; presenting concerns; establishing therapeutic rapport; resistance and barriers to therapy; strengths-based assessment; and work with distinct populations and use of particular modalities.

The Practice of Appointment Setting

Counselors need to re-examine the practice of appointment setting when working with the homeless. Appointment setting is a cultural practice that allows the therapist to structure her life and practice but often poses challenges for those experiencing homelessness. While the therapist may perceive the homeless client to have endless time on her hands, this stereotype does not hold true. Yet homeless clients often agree to appointment times that, based on such stereotypes, are dictated to them, and then find themselves juggling multiple demands. Moreover, as many homeless clients have limited access to money, transportation, and phones, their lifestyles are often laden with instability and inconsistencies. Therefore it behooves the therapist to be flexible with no shows and cancellations and to have other projects on which to work. Furthermore, Oudens and McQuiston note that in addition to being flexible, therapists must be reliable

⁹⁴ John O'Connor, "Between the Street and the Consulting Room: The Role of the Therapeutic Frame in Working with Homeless Clients," *European Journal of Psychotherapy, Counselling, and Health* 7 (2005): 225.

and follow through with scheduled appointments. They write, “People in shelters have had experiences queuing up at bureaucracies, in emergency rooms, or in jail or prison, which can evoke feelings of disrespect and lack of control.” Finally, if therapists must adhere to the office-setting, they must be both flexible and reliable. Kuhlman advises, “In summary, a walk-in format whereby a practitioner is always available to see whomever comes in without an appointment is the best office-culture model for serving the needs of homeless people.”⁹⁵

In my observation, it is typically those who are not working that experience the greatest difficulty with conventional appointment setting. They are required to be out of the shelter between nine and four and often depend on city busses for transportation. Although I engaged research partners around the topic of appointment setting, those that considered it problematic noted tardiness and absence on the part of the counselor rather than their own. We will return to this subject again in Chapter 5.

Presenting Concerns

The second nuance in working with homeless clients relates to their presenting problems. As previously mentioned, homeless individuals may be experiencing struggles with their sources of support, have a history of trauma and abuse, be undergoing changes in their self-perception and self-esteem, and most likely are facing severe stress. However, such presenting concerns are present in myriad populations. According to John O'Connor, persons experiencing homelessness can present with the same struggles, and the same inner resources, as those who are housed. Yet, writes O'Connor, “Their distinctive position is often in the depth and density of their difficulties as well as in the most obvious reality that they do not have a stable place into which they can retreat and

⁹⁵ Kuhlman, 58.

in which they can, among other things, find a physical space in which to encounter themselves.”⁹⁶ As evidenced in Chapter 2, research partners presented with the following seven themes: anger issues; boundaries; grief; living sober; identity issues; trust; and trauma and abuse. These themes are common in counseling with housed persons as well; however, my personal experience resonates with O’Connor’s comment that it is the “depth and density of their difficulties” that differs. In addition, O’Connor argues that many homeless individuals suffered from insecure attachment during childhood. Therefore, the therapist may serve as a transitional object of sorts by providing the client with something “solid to hold or contain something soft” during the homeless experience.⁹⁷ In working at a ninety-day emergency shelter, such a client-counselor relationship may be difficult to experience in such a short time.

Establishing Therapeutic Rapport

Developing a trusting, therapeutic rapport with persons experiencing homelessness is unique in some aspects. The first major distinction is that the relationship must be egalitarian rather than hierarchical. It is for this reason that informal contact, such as hanging out or having a sandwich and a cup of coffee at a drop-in shelter, is often the first step in establishing therapeutic rapport.⁹⁸ According to Kuhlman, “In office culture, the practitioner seldom leaves the authority role with the person who is receiving treatment. In street work, the practitioner steps into the authority role as little as possible. Such a reversal is made necessary by the many and varied resistances of these people in the early stages of contact. One reason that members of the clergy enjoy a better reception among street people than do professionals is because of their readiness to step

⁹⁶ O’Connor, 218.

⁹⁷ O’Connor, 220.

⁹⁸ Dennis et al., 1134.

out of role and adopt more of a peer perspective, in other words, ‘there but for the grace of God go I.’”⁹⁹ In addition to abandoning authority, the therapist must also abandon the appearance of neutrality and demonstrate profound care. By adopting a collaborative style and demonstrating care rather than a “cool distance,” the therapist can initially serve as a “basic holding container for all of the mess” put forth by the client as trust and acceptance are cultivated.¹⁰⁰

Although I cannot deny or minimize the power and authority inherent in my position as well as my personal cultural location, in developing therapeutic rapport with clients, like Kuhlman’s observation of clergy, I attempt to empower the client by placing him or her in the role of authority. I achieve this in two ways. I encounter the client with the attitude that the client is the expert on his or her life, not I. I am transparent about the fact that the client always has something to teach me. Also, I am a young, European American, petite female and my embodied nature is experienced, to no credit or fault of my own, as lacking authority. While I have been advised by those in other professions to practice deepening my voice, I believe that the registry of my voice contributes to my unofficial presence. We will revisit dynamics of counselor-client equity in Chapter 5.

Resistance and Barriers to Therapy

Although therapists may attempt to cultivate a collaborative and trusting therapeutic rapport, particular feelings of resistance and barriers to treatment may arise in those experiencing homelessness. According to Kuhlman, it is common for the homeless, as with many people, to have a profound sense of pride that interferes with their ability to seek and receive assistance. The homeless individual may have a negative history with

⁹⁹ Kuhlman, 21.

¹⁰⁰ O’Connor, 229 and 227.

counseling or with service-providers in general. Kuhlman advocates responding to resistance with empathy; by having a thick skin in the face of rejection; by respecting and honoring the individual's self-help efforts; cultivating a sense of humor; getting out of the therapist role; or, if appropriate, utilizing self-disclosure.¹⁰¹ In addition to resistance on the part of the homeless person, Milburn and Curry also note three barriers to treatment which, although the authors consider specific to ethnic minority populations, I believe to be more far-reaching.¹⁰² The first is the tremendous amount of stress that results from homelessness and the often inadequate social supports available to help persons cope. Therapy can seem superfluous in the face of such significant stressors. Second, homeless clients may be the victims of discrimination by therapists of other races and socioeconomic classes, and by therapists whose first language is other than that of the client. Barriers arise when therapy is not culturally-sensitive and relevant. Third, as previously mentioned, persons experiencing homelessness often struggle to engage in counseling services when their basic needs are not being met.

In Chapter 2 we heard LaToya comment that she simply did not “click” with her counselor and thus, while she wanted more counseling, she opted to terminate. According to LaToya, after she shared her thoughts and feelings an “uncomfortable” pause would ensue during which the counselor would look at her and not say anything. As the counselor's first language differs from LaToya's, I asked if she thought culture and/or language impacted their difficulty developing a therapeutic rapport. LaToya responded that she didn't think so because the counselor said she'd “been here” a long time. LaToya requested to work with a different counselor but was asked to attempt to work through

¹⁰¹ Kuhlman, 70-73.

¹⁰² Milburn and Curry, 255.

whatever difficulties they were having. It was at that point that she quit. I believe that research partners, and residents alike, may find it difficult to name exactly how culture impacts the therapeutic relationship -- especially when that relationship is strained. Research partners also may have censored their comments based on my relationship with the counseling staff. Nevertheless, it is my assessment that cultural differences can, although do not always, lead to resistance on the client's part if they cannot be appropriately addressed. It is ignorant to think that cultural differences may not also lead to resistance on the part of counselor as well. Issues of language, high vs. low context cultures, race, and age may all be operant when LaToya said, "[The counselor's] a nice person. She just don't know how to communicate well."

Strengths-Based Assessment

While most therapists assess clients' strengths as well as vulnerabilities, such an assessment is especially important in therapy with the homeless due to the fact that many Americans, therapists included, believe that homelessness results from characterological deficits. Therefore, successful therapy with a homeless individual includes attention to the "functional adaptations," "survival skills," and "daily problem solving skills,"¹⁰³ as well as "strengths, resilience and protective factors."¹⁰⁴ This requires examination of how one has continued on and coped during the experience of homelessness and, as Thrasher and Mowbray contend, for parents it may include an examination of how they managed to keep the family together.¹⁰⁵ According to Cohen, "An assessment process that involves

¹⁰³ Shirley P. Thrasher and Carol T. Mowbray, "A Strengths Perspective: An Ethnographic Study of Homeless Women with Children," *Health and Social Work* 20, no. 2 (1995): 100.

¹⁰⁴ Marcia B. Cohen, 640.

¹⁰⁵ Thrasher and Mowbray.

the service recipient in mutual identification of coping abilities, survival skills, and external resources can facilitate the mobilization of” one’s strengths and resilience.¹⁰⁶

Work with Distinct Populations and Use of Particular Modalities

This section includes an examination of therapy with families and victims of abuse, as well as treatment modalities grounded in empowerment work, culture- and value-sensitive therapy, and motivational interviewing techniques. First, therapy with homeless families differs in significant ways from that with housed families. Foremost, while many families are living on the streets, it is often common for therapists to encounter homeless families residing in family shelters which, according to Felix and Samuels, often entails increased danger and stress and decreased privacy.¹⁰⁷ Small living quarters and little privacy, in addition to the fact that parents are required to monitor their children at all times, results in added stress. Parents often lack the space and privacy to cope with their own emotions. According to Bassuk, “A mother’s distress about her homelessness is naturally communicated to her children. Because of the absence of a second parent and the lack of childcare in the majority of shelters, mothers often spend twenty-four hours a day with their small children.”¹⁰⁸ Homeless parents often lack access to affordable, quality childcare, which is not only taxing but makes individual therapy with children present, at times, futile. In addition, single mothers, especially those who have experienced chronic homelessness, are often fearful that their children will be taken by child protective services and they will be deemed “unfit mothers.” Koch, Lewis, and Quiñones write, “Permeating all of their stories is the stink of blame from a society that

¹⁰⁶ Marcia B. Cohen, 640.

¹⁰⁷ Felix and Samuels, 40.

¹⁰⁸ Bassuk, “Homeless Families,” 51.

views poor mothers and their poverty with suspicion and fear.”¹⁰⁹ Therefore, families often experience a sense of tenuousness and struggle to maintain feelings of normalcy and security. Bassuk adds, “Generally, the shelter atmosphere is tense and sometimes explodes into episodes of abuse.”¹¹⁰

Although we heard how camaraderie and friendship often develop within the shelter, research partners also expressed the pressure inherent to parenting in a fishbowl. Routines -- such as naptime, mealtime, and bedtime -- are difficult to maintain, as families must be out of the shelter during the day. Shelter residents often parent one another’s children, sometimes against the explicit request of the child’s own parent, and residents with young children often do not get a break from parenting. All these aspects of shelter living do create a tense atmosphere, as Bassuk contends above, and, in my observation, can lead to episodes of verbal and/or physical abuse.

In light of the particularities of this experience, assessment with homeless parents and families is unique. According to Felix and Samuels, assessment of the relationship is essential for homeless couples and should include questions addressing the parenting skills they each possess and lack; how the couple interacts in front of their children; if there is a history of or ongoing family violence; history of mental illness; and if psychoeducation would aid the couple in their relationship and parenting skills.¹¹¹ Felix and Samuels also note that assessment with single mothers must explore: whether she is involved in an abusive relationship; if she is abusive or neglectful of her children; any history of mental illness; her capacity to work and provide for her family; her support network; if she is attentive to her children’s holistic needs; and, if psychoeducation would

¹⁰⁹ Koch, Lewis, and Quiñones, 62.

¹¹⁰ Bassuk, “Homeless Families,” 52.

¹¹¹ Felix and Samuels, 37.

assist her in parenting.¹¹² This same assessment is also necessary for single fathers.

Finally, Milburn and Curry advocate that due to increased rates of pregnancy and recent births among homeless women, interventions must help women to “identify noncustodial parents and require them to provide child support.”¹¹³ This requires legal action in which the therapist may aid the client by serving as an advocate. What is interesting to note is that none of the literature included in my review addressed single fatherhood - a population often present at Our House.¹¹⁴ Recall Anthony, the single father of five children who shared with me that it was a struggle just to get himself and his children dressed and out of the shelter each morning. More research is needed to determine the unique experience of homeless single fathers and their children, beginning with the fact that it is often quite difficult to find family shelters that will accept them.

Second, as indicated above, homeless women often have a history of violence and abuse. In this section we turn to examine the impact of such an experience on therapeutic practice, especially as it is not uncommon for such women to reside in general homeless shelters rather than shelters specifically designed for victims of domestic violence.¹¹⁵ According to Johnson and Lee, “Case management services for homeless families tend to deal with the practical needs of income and low-cost housing, but do not deal adequately with homeless women’s psychological needs. In contrast, feminist-led battered women’s shelters address these psychological dependency needs, but fall short in addressing housing and economic needs.”¹¹⁶ Foremost, according to Ryback and Bassuk, “Most

¹¹² Felix and Samuels, 38.

¹¹³ Milburn and Curry, 259.

¹¹⁴ Through subsequent research I identified both theoretical and empirical literature addressing homelessness and single fatherhood; however, a PsycINFO search produced only a few relevant articles in contrast to the significant body of literature addressing homelessness and single motherhood.

¹¹⁵ Johnson and Lee, 414.

¹¹⁶ Johnson and Lee, 416.

battering victims have a devastating low self-concept, are socially isolated, and are extremely dependent on others. Generally, they have a history of impoverished early relationships.”¹¹⁷ They often experience fear that their whereabouts will be discovered and worry about the welfare of their children. To aid such women in recovery, Koch, Lewis, and Quiñones advocate assisting women through Judith Herman’s three stages of healing: “first of creating a sense of safety and control, then a period of remembrance and mourning, and finally the move toward establishing reconnection.”¹¹⁸ As most emergency shelter programs are only ninety days, it is likely that women will begin to gain a sense of safety and control as the ninety days comes to an end. For this reason, mental health professionals need referral resources to continue helping women on their healing journey. Otherwise, the financial stress on homeless single mothers is so tremendous that they will often return to their abusive relationships.

Recall the story of Briteny. Briteny gave birth to the youngest of her three children three months prior to his due date. While her son remained in the neo-natal ward, Briteny fled the physical abuse inflicted by her son’s father and moved into Our House. After 59 days of hospitalization, Britney brought her son “home” to the shelter where she and her other two children were residing. It is easy to imagine how even after ninety days in the shelter Briteny had a surplus of housing, economic, and psychological needs.

In addition to work with distinct populations, the literature also addresses the use of various treatment modalities. The first modality we will explore is empowerment work with women. This approach is also relevant as a group work approach for victims of

¹¹⁷ Ryback and Bassuk, 57.

¹¹⁸ Koch, Lewis, and Quiñones, 75.

abuse. First, numerous studies indicate the effectiveness of group work with persons experiencing homelessness, especially due to their relational need for support. As case management often focuses on securing resources, it is important to have a forum for addressing the personal and psychological causes and impacts of homelessness. Cohen writes, “Groups have been used successfully with homeless people to foster empowerment, promote mutual aid, stimulate creativity, build skills, provide community education, increase consumer input into agency decision making, and generate social action.”¹¹⁹ Most of the approaches to group work found in the literature utilize an empowerment strategy. According to Johnson and Lee, “Empowerment strategies are aimed at releasing and developing the potentialities of the person and family *and* at changing oppressive societal structures, such as discrimination in the provision of basic survival resources (e.g., housing). The empowerment approach recognizes that people must empower themselves.”¹²⁰ Empowerment group work aims to create mutual relationships among group members. Shelter residents are treated as guest as opposed to client. Empowerment groups strive to assist members in pinpointing and building on their functional adaptations and strengths. In addition, empowerment work raises members’ consciousness about systemic oppression and injustice. Group members are empowered to take ownership of their own destinies, while recognizing the “power blocks” present both in the system and in their own personalities.¹²¹ In formulating a call for revised praxis at Our House we will return to examine the studies detailing the implementation of empowerment groups.¹²² However, as stated in Chapter 1, personality conflict in the

¹¹⁹ Marcia B. Cohen, 641.

¹²⁰ Johnson and Lee, 417-18.

¹²¹ Johnson and Lee, 417.

¹²² Koch, Lewis, and Quiñones; Johnson and Lee.

shelter often impacted the residents' willingness to engage in a process-oriented approach to group work. Yet, I also wonder if residents' unwillingness to empathize with one another and engage one another's emotions leads to significant personality conflict. Therefore, in implementing an empowerment approach to group work it is essential that conflict among residents also be directly addressed.

A second therapeutic approach found in the literature is culture- and value-sensitive therapy. Woven throughout much of the literature is the notion that therapists must recognize their own cultural locations and develop competency at intercultural counseling. The aim of therapy with the homeless is not colonization but empowerment toward the realization of both resources and self.¹²³ Although he addresses more broadly therapy with the poor, Harry J. Aponte advocates a therapeutic approach that understands emotional and relational problems within a framework of culture, values, economics, politics, and spirit. Utilizing this method, Aponte posits three goals of therapy with the poor. First, "The poor need to feel control over their own lives. They must experience therapy as a place where they discover their inner potential to determine their lives' direction."¹²⁴ Second, "The poor need to work not only to solve problems but also to reach for purpose in life."¹²⁵ And finally, therapy must help the poor to recognize their own ecologies, noting how their various cultural locations, as well as their communal and individual identities, impact their access to resources and present circumstances. Aponte constructs a method of treatment for the under-organized poor family and utilizes

¹²³ Kuhlman warns that while therapists should avoid colonizing the homeless to a middle class mentality, in advocating for the homeless they should also avoid over-identification which may result in an us vs. them schema against the system. Kuhlman, 94.

¹²⁴ Harry J. Aponte, *Bread and Spirit: Therapy with the New Poor* (New York: Norton, 1994), 9.

¹²⁵ Aponte, 10.

vignettes to demonstrate how an ecostructural approach, which is sensitive to culture and values, can provide access to bread as well as nourishment of the spirit.

Finally, a relatively small amount of the literature advocates the use of motivational interviewing techniques. According to Felix and Samuels, this modality is appropriate due to its efficacy with individuals abusing substances, an issue common among the homeless population.¹²⁶ Motivational interviewing may help homeless clients to recognize ways in which they may be interfering in the achievement of goals. According to O'Connor, "Like everyone, people who are homeless have a desire to bring about change in their lives, however stuck they are. There is something that is ready to be mobilized, something though that is often hidden behind layers of damage and distortion."¹²⁷ For this reason, Falk notes that motivational interviewing techniques may be helpful toward the identification of symptoms that thwart the attainment of goals. Falk writes, "These techniques allow clients to work at their own pace with nonjudgmental support from staff, and they provide staff with a therapeutic framework and tools with which to reach clients. Once the client agrees that an issue exists, he or she can be moved toward intensive treatment as part of its solution."¹²⁸ Counselors who are not aware of their own culture and values, and who have not adequately assessed the client's motivation, run the risk of trying to help the client to meet the counselor's goals for the client, rather than the client's own goals. This often takes the form of oppression, as counselors attempt to coerce clients into adapting to the status quo. As a new clinician gaining experience working with the residents of Our House, I often naively attempted to

¹²⁶ Felix and Samuels, 43.

¹²⁷ O'Connor, 220.

¹²⁸ Falk, 11.

provide motivation for the client and such motivation was largely fueled by my own cultural values.

Sociology

Homeless theories within the disciplines of sociology and psychology share many commonalities. Similar aspects of homelessness, such as rates, demographics, and causes are addressed in both bodies of literature. In addition, researchers are often involved in interdisciplinary research, publishing in cross-disciplinary journals and many authors write from a social psychological perspective, whether explicit or not. The following section mentions of the areas of significant overlap between the psychological and sociological literature, provides a short history of the sociology of homelessness, examines the causes purported for homelessness, discusses issues of affiliation, social ties, identity, shelterization, depression and “doubling up,” and concludes with evaluation of current shelter practices and recommendations for best-practices.

As previously mentioned, the disciplines of psychology and sociology provide insight and explanation about many of the same facets of homelessness, such as demographics, rates, and the impact of deinstitutionalization. Conscious to avoid redundancy, it is important to include a bit about deinstitutionalization from the sociological perspective. According to Christopher Jencks, many “sidewalk sociologists,” upon noticing the increased numbers of homeless and their “bizarre” behavior in the 1980s, pointed the finger at deinstitutionalization. Jencks argues that while deinstitutionalization occurred in the 1950s, rates of homelessness increased very little between 1955 and 1975.¹²⁹ Jencks therefore posits that the marked increase in homelessness during the 1980s resulted from distinctive waves or rounds of

¹²⁹ Christopher Jencks, *The Homeless* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), 24.

deinstitutionalization, each accompanied by unique changes in policy that culminated in the “gross neglect” of the 1980s.¹³⁰ What is distinctive about Jencks’s analysis of deinstitutionalization is that it depicts deinstitutionalization as a partisan, political rigmarole rather than as a process of shifting care provisions for the mentally ill. Jencks’s analysis is valuable in that it recognizes the complex political and ethical dynamics at play in deinstitutionalization.

Like the psychological literature, the sociological literature also addresses mental illness among the homeless. Only one comment is in order related to this topic: in a study conducted by Snow, Baker, Anderson and Martin, participants were considered mentally ill “if they met at least two of the following three criteria: prior institutionalization; designation as mentally ill by other homeless individuals; and/or conduct that was so bizarre and situationally inappropriate that most observers would be likely to construe it as symptomatic of mental illness.”¹³¹ The use of such criteria are congruent with a sociological understanding of mental illness as behavior that is atypical and results in “risky” or “exceedingly difficult” interactions with those in one’s social context.¹³² However, such criteria in no way parallel psychological criteria for diagnosis. Therefore, one must be discerning in the review of research regarding how mental illness is defined and whether such definitions are couched in sociological or psychological understandings. In a manner similar to such sociologists, I frequently hear shelter staff referring to residents as “crazy” or commenting that “s/he must have a mental problem” when one’s behavior is perceived by the staff or other residents as bizarre.

¹³⁰ Jencks, 34.

¹³¹ David A. Snow, Susan G. Baker, Leon Anderson, and Michael Martin, “The Myth of Pervasive Mental Illness among the Homeless,” *Social Problems* 33, no. 5 (1986): 412.

¹³² Snow et al., “Myth,” 412.

A Short Overview of Homelessness

Ione Y. DeOllos and Howard M. Bahr both provide histories of homelessness beginning with ancient Greece, continuing through the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, the Industrial Revolution, to its genesis in the U.S. DeOllos notes the presence of homeless families as early as the Great Depression, single men prior to and following World War II, and the mentally ill on the skid rows of the 1970s. Centuries of homelessness produced numerous writings from various disciplines, including a typology constructed by Martin Luther in 1528 advising the reader on how to address and care for each classification.¹³³ However, Nels Anderson's 1923 text *The Hobo: The Sociology of the Homeless Man* is perhaps the earliest substantial sociological inquiry into the life of the homeless. Anderson also constructed a typology, developed theory regarding the causes of homelessness, and attempted to provide a description of the hobo's everyday life.¹³⁴ By the 1930s the National Committee on the Care of the Transient and Homeless conducted studies attempting to determine the number of homeless or migrant people, after which the Federal Emergency Relief Act was instated. In 1936, Sutherland and Locke published their famous study of four hundred men residing in a Chicago shelter. They identified paths to homelessness and constructed the theory of shelterization. Sociological research and theory construction continued throughout the mid-20th century and Bogue's 1963 book *Skid Row in American Cities* forecasted the disappearance of

¹³³ Howard M. Bahr, *Skid Row: An Introduction to Disaffiliation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), 110.

¹³⁴ Ione Y. DeOllos, *On Becoming Homeless: The Shelterization Process for Homeless Families* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1997), 18.

homelessness based on his assessment of societal changes. Following this period, according to Shlay and Rossi, “homelessness was not a popular research topic.”¹³⁵

Sociological and social scientific research into homelessness peaked in the 1980s predominantly as a result of the increased number and visibility of the homeless. However, other social changes also produced greater research efforts, including the shrinking of skid rows, changes in legislature related to public drunkenness and loitering, and the emergence of homeless women and children – the “new homeless.” According to Shlay and Rossi, literature in the 1980s focused on “defining what is meant by homelessness, describing the characteristics and composition of the homeless population, assessing the macrostructural and microlevel causes of homelessness, counting the homeless, and evaluating public and private attempts to address problems of homelessness as well as attempts to prevent it.”¹³⁶ In 1973 Bahr argued that research addressing homeless women was scant due to the fact that they often do not reside in skid rows, that they are often excluded from sociological definitions of homelessness, and that rates of homeless women pale in comparison to those of men.¹³⁷ However, as the demographics changed, research efforts of the 1990s and 2000s emphasized the “new homeless” and a significant body of literature now exists regarding homeless women and families.

The Causes of Homelessness

The following section examines the causes of homelessness as articulated in the sociological literature generally, the debate regarding the individual vs. structural causes

¹³⁵ Anne B. Shlay and Peter H. Rossi, “Social Science Research and Contemporary Studies of Homelessness,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 18 (1992): 131.

¹³⁶ Shlay and Rossi, 130.

¹³⁷ Bahr, 176.

of homelessness, and studies depicting the beliefs held by both service providers and the public regarding the causes of homelessness. According to DeOllos, the causes of homelessness can be categorized as follows: economic reasons; lack of affordable housing; deinstitutionalization; and personal reasons which includes substance abuse, domestic violence, “unstable relationships and domestic disruption.”¹³⁸ While unemployment or underemployment is often cited as a primary cause of homelessness, according to DeOllos, “The most common self-reported reason given for homelessness by individuals and families is eviction from homes by landlords or primary tenants.”¹³⁹ This often occurs when families are spending a disproportionately large percentage of their income on rent or mortgage payments. In addition, the 1980s resulted in a significant reduction in affordable housing which, when combined with a record of eviction, makes securing stable housing nearly impossible. Jencks deconstructs the complex situation of affordable housing in the 1980s and contends that the shortage resulted not only from a decrease in SROs (single room occupancies) but also from the increase in rental rates as a simple result of supply and demand. Nevertheless, the combination of a lack of affordable housing, high rental rates, the demolition of many SROs in the 1980s, and cuts in federal subsidy programs significantly impact the lives of the poor and often results in homelessness. Finally, although DeOllos contends that deinstitutionalization and personal causes such as alcohol abuse should be considered causes of homelessness, she critiques the sociological criteria for mental illness employed by some researchers. DeOllos cites a study by Redburn and Buss in which they note that behaviors by the homeless which appear abnormal may in fact serve as mechanisms for

¹³⁸ DeOllos, 46 and 52.

¹³⁹ DeOllos, 47.

coping and protection. Therefore, mental health practitioners must enact culturally sensitive diagnoses that recognize the particularities of the homeless culture.

Jencks also cites numerous causes of homelessness including deinstitutionalization, the 1980s crack epidemic, a decreased need for unskilled labor, the decline of marriage (which specifically impacts women's economic status), the destruction of skid row, changes in the housing market, inadequate social and family ties, and improvements in the shelter system.¹⁴⁰ First, according to Jencks, crack use among the homeless in the 1980s paralleled alcoholism and can be understood as both a cause and a response to homelessness. Jencks warns the reader not to accept simple explanations; rather, the crack epidemic may be understood as a cause of homelessness not simply because the homeless lacked the moral resolve not to abuse substances, but also because the manufacturers of cocaine made the drug in smaller quantities and cheaper. Second, the 1970s and 1980s produced decreased relative wages for unskilled workers and the "least desirable" workers were virtually unemployable. Many men lacked the safety nets necessary to weather such changes in the labor market. In contrast, women's relative wages were increasing, but marriage rates were declining. According to Jencks, this fact alone would not cause an increase in homelessness. However, as marriage rates among low-income women declined, birth rates increased, resulting in many more homeless, single parent households. Next, Jencks argues that the destruction of SROs largely occurred in the 1960s and 1970s, making it an improbable cause of increased homelessness in the 1980s. Rather, as previously mentioned, it was the combination of the decline in available rooms and the rise in rental rates that increased rates of homelessness. Finally, Jencks argues that improvements in the shelter system

¹⁴⁰ Jencks. Deinstitutionalization and social ties are covered in separate sections.

may have increased homelessness for a number of reasons. First, families considered homeless are given priority regarding subsidized housing and this often necessitates living in a shelter rather than doubling up. Second, individuals and families may prefer shelter living to remaining in abusive households or enduring the conflict that often accompanies doubling up. Jencks emphasizes that he is not arguing that people prefer shelter living, rather that it may be preferable to some abusive or demeaning situations.¹⁴¹

Based on their study of the literal homeless in Chicago, Rossi and Wright found that the majority of their sample population shared three common traits: they are extremely poor, “exhibit high levels of physical, mental, and social disabilities,” and lack adequate social ties.¹⁴² These common conditions are not the causes of homelessness but, according to the authors, interact and result from such causes as a lack of affordable housing, a shortage of low-skill employment, inadequate assistance from family or friends, and the limits of assistance programs for the disabled. Therefore, the authors suggest the need for more “generous income maintenance programs and wider coverage for disability programs” as well as increasing affordable housing and low-skill job opportunities.¹⁴³

In relation to the attention to causes of homelessness, a significant body of literature also addresses the contention surrounding the individual vs. structural causes of homelessness. According to Tracy and Stoecker, “When examining why people become homeless, researchers have taken two basic perspectives. The first, an individualistic perspective, focuses on the characteristics of the homeless themselves, resulting in ‘bad people’ and ‘bad luck’ explanations ... The advocates of the second, a critical

¹⁴¹ Jencks, 106.

¹⁴² Peter H. Rossi and James D. Wright, “The Determinants of Homelessness,” *Health Affairs* 6 (1987): 22.

¹⁴³ Rossi and Wright, 30.

perspective, focus upon the systemic factors – political and economic – which produce homelessness.”¹⁴⁴ Researchers of the first perspective are accepting of the status quo and find fault with the individual who cannot operate within the system as it stands. This is otherwise known as “blaming the victim.” According to Tracy and Stoecker, theorists who contend that homelessness results from deinstitutionalization are blaming the victim for systemic causes such as lack of affordable housing and proper employment. Tracy and Stoecker continue by noting that researchers and theorists who advocate against the “blaming the victim” perspective often fail to see how people “often do require individual services” and have personal problems or attributes which interact negatively with the systemic factors.¹⁴⁵ Jencks concurs with this assessment when he writes, “If no one drank, took drugs, lost contact with reality, or messed up at work, homelessness would be rare. If America had a safety net comparable to Sweden’s or Germany’s, homelessness would also be rare. It is the combination of personal vulnerability and political indifference that has left people in the streets.”¹⁴⁶ Therefore, rather than an either/or dilemma, it is a both/and situation in which both individual and structural causes lead to homelessness. Susan E. Wright utilizes the theory of Lévi-Strauss in noting the “general tendency for belief systems about causes of inequality to exhibit themselves in paired dichotomies based on oppositional modes of reasoning.”¹⁴⁷ Therefore, the tendency to construct either/or dichotomies is deeply rooted, yet overly simplistic.

¹⁴⁴ Tracy and Stoecker, “Homelessness: The Service Providers’ Perspective on Blaming the Victim,” *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare* 20 (1993): 44.

¹⁴⁵ Tracy and Stoecker, 46.

¹⁴⁶ Jencks, 47-48.

¹⁴⁷ Susan E. Wright, “Presidential Address: Blaming the Victim, Blaming Society or Blaming the Discipline: Fixing Responsibility for Poverty and Homelessness,” *Sociological Quarterly* 34, no. 1 (1993): 2.

Joanne Neale arrives at this same conclusion by employing a feminist, deconstructive analysis of homeless theory.¹⁴⁸ Writing within the British context, Neale notes how policy changes reflect the shift from a “blame the victim” understanding to a “by no fault of their own” perspective. Neale argues that the essentialism of such constructions, which was also present in first wave feminism, results in false binaries. Using postmodern and poststructuralist theories, Neale indicates how the homeless are subjective and as such are constructed by the system and simultaneously constructing the system. By utilizing a “structuration” approach, Neale concludes that “individuals do not cause their own homelessness, and it is therefore unacceptable and indeed impractical to leave them to their own devices when housing and support networks fail. Homeless people are not, however, helpless victims devoid of all agency. Consequently, they have a fundamental part to play in defining their needs and in shaping the provisions available to them.”¹⁴⁹

Finally, according to Susan E. Wright, academics often unknowingly fall into the victim-blaming trap; that is to say, at times social scientists oversimplify complex phenomenon by constructing typologies in which categories are considered mutually exclusive and the structural implications are overlooked. Wright’s caution to academics should be duly noted, as this study will employ the use of typologies in formulating an assessment of homeless clients within pastoral counseling practice.

We now turn to examine what, according to sociological literature, service providers and the public believe to be the causes of homelessness. In study a conducted

¹⁴⁸ Joanne Neale, “Theorising Homelessness: Contemporary Sociological and Feminist Perspectives,” in *Homelessness and Social Policy*, ed. Roger Burrows, Nicholas Pleace, Deborah Quilgars (New York: Routledge, 1997), 35-49.

¹⁴⁹ Neale, 48-49.

by Tracy and Stoecker, eighteen service providers at various levels of responsibility and stature were interviewed regarding their beliefs about the causes of homelessness. Of the eighteen interviewed, two respondents noted only individual causes while thirteen of the eighteen considered systemic factors to be the top cause of homelessness.¹⁵⁰ According to Tracy and Stoecker, “Of all causes cited by the eighteen informants, these three systemic causes – housing, economy, government policy – were cited a total of 13, 10, and 6 times, respectively.”¹⁵¹ While their sample population is small and more research is needed, it is encouraging to note that service providers recognize the complexity of causes given that much service provision focuses on individual as opposed to systemic solutions.

In addition to examining the perspectives of service providers, research also addresses the public’s perception of the causes of homelessness. Barret A. Lee, David W. Lewis, and Susan Hinze Jones conducted two studies – one with respondents in Nashville, Tennessee and the other via a nationwide telephone survey – in which the interviewees were asked if society or the homeless personally are at fault for their position.¹⁵² The authors contend that the public’s belief about the causes of homelessness is important due to the public’s influence surrounding policy decisions as well as the direct consequences, such as the public’s willingness to rent housing to the previously homeless or to hire a homeless individual for a job.¹⁵³ Therefore, the authors examined how status differences, as well as the presence of the homeless in one’s community,

¹⁵⁰ Tracy and Stoecker, 47-48.

¹⁵¹ Tracy and Stoecker, 47-48.

¹⁵² Barret A. Lee, David W. Lewis, and Susan Hinze Jones, “Are the Homeless to Blame? A Test of Two Theories,” *Sociological Quarterly* 33, no. 4 (1992): 535-52; Barrett A. Lee, Susan Hinze Jones, and David W. Lewis, “Public Beliefs about the Causes of Homelessness,” *Social Forces* 69, no. 1 (1990): 253-65.

¹⁵³ Lee, Lewis, Hinze Jones, 536.

impact one's beliefs about the causes of homelessness. The authors concluded "more Americans attribute homelessness to structural forces than internal deficiencies."¹⁵⁴ The presence of this belief was indicated by the public-arena theory, which states that those who encounter the homeless in their public arenas will be more likely to attribute the cause of homelessness to structural rather than individual factors. In their Nashville study, the authors determined that respondents who believed in structural causes were more likely to see homelessness as a greater social problem than crime, urban growth, the schools and traffic; in contrast, those who understood homelessness to be caused by individual factors were more likely to rate other social problems higher.¹⁵⁵ Thus, the authors conclude that "the recent emphasis placed by scholars, advocates, government officials, and the media on the structural bases of homelessness has led the public to define the issue in similar terms."¹⁵⁶

The public's response as indicated in the above studies is in marked contrast to earlier public sentiment. Writing in the early 1970s, Bahr theorizes that non-homeless Americans assuage their guilt and possible envy for the homeless person's supposed lack of responsibilities by rationalizing that such individuals enjoy and prefer the homeless life. At this point in the history of homelessness, Bahr is writing specifically about the homeless male on skid row.

Regardless of the public's intellectual understanding about the causes of homelessness, there remains a pervasive stigma surrounding the homeless. According to Erving Goffman, stigma is "'deeply discrediting,' spoiling one's identity and

¹⁵⁴ Lee, Lewis, Hinze Jones, 547.

¹⁵⁵ Lee, Hinze Jones, Lewis, 261.

¹⁵⁶ Lee, Hinze Jones, Lewis, 263.

disqualifying one from full social acceptance.”¹⁵⁷ In time, stigmatized individuals often come to internalize such discrediting and disqualifying beliefs about themselves.¹⁵⁸ We will examine further the impact of homelessness upon one’s identity in a subsequent section. As mentioned at the conclusion of our review of the causes of homelessness according to psychological literature, research partners did not articulate how systemic factors relate to what they identified as personal causes. Therefore, counselors can help residents by identifying such connections.

The Homeless Stigma

Bahr dedicates a chapter of his text to an examination of how various populations, including the experts, the media, clergypersons, and the general public, view homeless men living on skid row. Bahr notes that such populations may feel threatened by the disaffiliated man, misperceiving him as impervious to the power of organizations and the larger system. Homeless individuals are often thought to be alcoholic, mentally ill, with little education, character, ambition, and more. In discussing the man on skid row, Bahr argues that he is stigmatized both as a result of his appearance – toothless, bizarre behavior and gestures, missing limbs – as well as his character – drunkenness, lawlessness, and disaffiliation. Link et al. contend that the public is ambivalent about the homeless, indicating that while they have a desire to help the homeless, they simultaneously are viewed as having poor characters and being undesirable to have in one’s presence.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁷ Jo Phelan, Bruce G. Link, Robert E. Moore, and Ann Stueve, “The Stigma of Homelessness: The Impact of the Label ‘Homeless’ on Attitudes Toward Poor Persons,” *Social Psychology Quarterly* 60, no. 4 (1997): 323.

¹⁵⁸ Bahr, 47.

¹⁵⁹ Bruce G. Link, Sharon Schwartz, Robert E. Moore, Jo Phelan, Elmer L. Struening, Anne Stueve, and Mary Ellen Colten, “Public Knowledge, Attitudes and Beliefs about Homeless People: Evidence for Compassion Fatigue?,” *American Journal of Community Psychology* 23 (1995): 533-55.

In an effort to further explore the stigma of homelessness, Phelan et al. conducted a study with 1,507 adults across the U.S. to determine if the homeless were more heavily stigmatized than the poor. Their hypothesis was grounded in the belief that, as most people have a limited intellectual or objective understanding of homelessness, their perceptions of the homeless are largely determined by their personal experiences. According to the authors, most often such experiences include exposure to a small number of highly visible homeless individuals either in one's community or as portrayed by the media who are viewed as "unusually dangerous, disruptive, or unaesthetic" in behavior and appearance.¹⁶⁰ The authors utilized a series of vignettes in which some characters were either poor or homeless, and either physically ill or mentally ill. While the results indicate that the *physically* ill homeless are not viewed more critically than the *mentally* ill homeless, the authors did find that homelessness carries a greater stigma than poverty. Participants rated the homeless man in the vignette as more dangerous and indicated the desire for greater social distance.¹⁶¹ Therefore, although society appears to recognize the structural antecedents to homelessness, as a population, the homeless are more stigmatized than the poor. One possible explanation for this contradiction is that the former is an intellectual assessment, whereas the latter involves more emotional appraisal. Cognitive compassion is often easier to summon than emotive understanding or empathy. This explanation is purely conjecture, but points to an interesting area for further research. Yet, this fact can help us to understand possibly why LaToya and other research partners considered themselves the "unhomeless homeless" as they consider

¹⁶⁰ Phelan et al., 325.

¹⁶¹ Phelan et al., 331.

themselves poor rather than homeless, as media portrayal of homelessness connotes danger and disruption.

As previously indicated by Tracy and Stoecker's research, the majority of service providers cite structural factors as the primary cause of homelessness. However, service providers also stigmatize the homeless. Noting the tendency to study the deviant rather than the caregivers or the experts, Bahr specifically examines the homeless stigma as articulated by service providers. Admittedly, this study also errs in its failure to include the voices of service providers. Nevertheless, commenting on the hopelessness of the skid row man, one service provider cited in Bahr's study commented, "There is little expectation that anything can be done to make these men members of the 'respectable' community again."¹⁶² Thus, according to Bahr, service providers often feel that the homeless are indebted, especially the "unworthy" homeless, while the homeless themselves feel they are entitled to the services intended for their use.

Affiliation and Social Ties Among the Homeless

As evident in the psychological literature, disintegration of social ties is an oft-cited reason for homelessness. However, in her review of the sociological literature, DeOllos notes marked disagreement regarding the usefulness of social and familial ties, the extent that such ties can buffer or prevent homelessness, and the extent to which poor social networks are a cause of homelessness. DeOllos argues that such disagreements result from differences in methodology and sample population. Thus, if one engages in participant observation, the existence and impact of social supports may be more apparent than in a study utilizing surveys with close-ended questions.¹⁶³ In addition,

¹⁶² Bahr, 43.

¹⁶³ DeOllos, 43.

families may be more likely to report the existence of social ties as compared to men. According to Jencks, if family and social ties were loosening then one would expect less “doubling up,” since the homeless would have no family or friends on whom to depend. Rather, Jencks argues that as family size decreases and family structure has changed -- for example, greater divorce and single-parent families -- there are simply fewer people toward whom one can turn.

The unique contribution of the sociological literature is its exploration of exchange theory and how disaffiliation relates to powerlessness. First, DeOllos utilizes exchange theory to demonstrate how families and friends help to ensure one another’s survival through reciprocity and assistance. According to DeOllos, exchange among kinsman is often done freely and specific value is not assigned to the items received; in contrast, exchanges with friends and neighbors are expected to be of equal value and the exchange should occur within a reasonable amount of time. Families survived such disasters as the Great Depression and other experiences with poverty based on exchange among kinsmen. However, DeOllos notes limitations to such arrangements, including the diaspora of today’s families and the pressure of limited resources. Nevertheless, families often provide financial assistance, material assistance such as transportation and food, non-material assistance such as childcare and health care, emotional assistance and socialization. DeOllos contends that the homeless often report a breakdown in their exchange networks. Therefore, according to DeOllos, “Maintenance of exchange relationships is an important factor in families’ survival of crises.”¹⁶⁴

In light of the role of exchange theory, DeOllos then turns to examine how the needs of homeless families are met. DeOllos reviews the sociological literature and

¹⁶⁴ DeOllos, 77.

surmises that there are numerous differences regarding families' ability to assist their homeless relatives as well as the types of assistance they are and are not able to provide. In addition, a pressure to reciprocate may be present and thus exchanges may result in conflict. Finally, according to DeOllos, "Pressures to reciprocate may lead needy families to approach other more impersonal sources of aid."¹⁶⁵ From DeOllos's own research, she found that thirty-three percent of mothers received assistance with childcare and twenty-seven percent received assistance with lodging; however, she notes that many of the women participants were concerned that relatives may be providing greater assistance than they could afford. In addition, respondents also reported feeling that meddling often accompanied acts of assistance. As a result, the homeless mothers in DeOllos's sample developed alternative networks of aid that included parenting support such as childcare, emotional support and assistance during pregnancy.¹⁶⁶ Mothers also exchanged information about available resources, offered friendship and companionship to one another, and a sense of cohesion developed among the mothers in the shelter. DeOllos thus posits that although social and familial ties are present in the lives of homeless families, alternative exchange networks often emerge which serve as more mutual forms of assistance and support.

My observations as well as the research partners' reports resonate with DeOllos's research. Some shelter residents seek respite in the homes of friends and family members during the period of nine to four when they must be out of the shelter. Some receive childcare from their own parents or siblings. Some receive financial support from friends and family in direct ways, such as cash assistance, or indirect ways, such as splitting the

¹⁶⁵ DeOllos, 83.

¹⁶⁶ DeOllos, 89.

cost of a storage unit. Yet, as indicated in Chapter 2, many of the research partners reported developing friendships and support networks with other shelter residents that often outlasted their shelter stay.

Disaffiliation and its relation to powerlessness is a common theme in sociological literature on homelessness. In his 1973 text, Bahr posits the notion that powerlessness results from disaffiliation as the diminishment of affiliative ties produces a “loss of control over one’s environment, both social and non-social.”¹⁶⁷ A simple synonym for Bahr’s definition of power is agency. One exercises power when she is able to enact agency and effect change in a given sphere or circumstance. Power is produced through social and organizational connection. Persons without status or office in such social systems or organizations are therefore powerless. They are disaffiliated, or in some instances inactive, and thus powerless. Therefore, Bahr contends that although power is difficult to measure, because it is brandished by organization and affiliation, the powerless quickly become evident. Furthermore, because power “has a worth in itself,” all of society seeks power to some extent.¹⁶⁸ Thus, the powerlessness of the homeless contributes to society’s feelings of fear and abhorrence toward the homeless.¹⁶⁹ Finally, it is plausible, in Bahr’s estimation, that the combination of the homeless stigma and the accompanying powerlessness inevitably produces feelings of low self-esteem.

Based on Bahr’s theory, LaGory, Ritchey and Fitzpatrick conducted a study in order to determine if, indeed, the homeless are disaffiliated and the nature of the

¹⁶⁷ Bahr, 13.

¹⁶⁸ Bahr, 29.

¹⁶⁹ Bahr, 29.

relationship between affiliation and personal agency or efficacy.¹⁷⁰ In order to measure personal efficacy, the authors examined the participants' perceived feelings of control over their physical and mental health symptoms, their income, their knowledge of necessary services and resources, their degree of environmental dissatisfaction, and their sense of anomie vs. mastery.¹⁷¹ In addition, they measured affiliation using a twenty-six-item scale addressing the following four subscales: expressive ties, support from relatives, support from friends, and the presence of acquaintances throughout the daily routine. According to their findings, less than ten percent of their sample lacked social support.¹⁷² Yet, according to the authors, their social connections are quite complex. The homeless participants mirror the general population in number of connections and frequency of contact, yet their social connections reportedly do not satisfy their support needs. In addition, LaGory et al. determined that affiliation has very little impact on perceived personal efficacy or power, as such. The only subscale that demonstrated a significant relationship with personal efficacy was that of expressive ties. This means that when the homeless respondents feel loved and cared for they are more likely to feel a sense of agency; in addition, the authors note that the presence of expressive ties showed significant consequences for depression, mastery and health symptoms.¹⁷³ While their study does not support Bahr's theory that power is achieved through relation and connection, it is insightful for caregivers as they attempt to empower individuals experiencing homelessness. In addition, LaGory et al. write, "Expressive ties, more than

¹⁷⁰ Mark LaGory, Ferri Ritchey, and Kevin Fitzpatrick, "Homelessness and Affiliation," *Sociological Quarterly* 32, no. 2 (1991): 201-18.

¹⁷¹ LaGory et al., "Homelessness and Affiliation," 203.

¹⁷² LaGory et al., "Homelessness and Affiliation," 208.

¹⁷³ LaGory et al., "Homelessness and Affiliation," 209.

life events of education, significantly influence homeless persons' sense of mastery, which is likely to be important for immediate problem solving."¹⁷⁴

Because the social connections of the homeless are largely unable to meet their support needs, shelter staff and counselors must not falsely believe that residents with friends and family will be cared for. Many times residents have been asked to leave the shelter due to misconduct and, when staff is aware that family live nearby, the assumption is that the resident will not be on the street. However, Wrakishia's mother was living in low-income senior housing and would be evicted if caught with an overnight guest. Briteny's family had the space to give but was unwilling to allow her three children to stay. Martha's family verbally offered support, but never followed through. Therefore, social connections may not prevent one from becoming homeless but may help to empower one to transcend the homeless experience.

The Impact of Homelessness on Identity

Although their findings replicate much of the psychological literature, Boydell, Goering, and Morrell-Bellai explore the impact of homelessness upon one's identity from two theoretical perspectives – an interactionist analysis and a symbolic interactionist perspective.¹⁷⁵ An interactionist analysis, akin to Goffman's concept of impression management, is the notion that as people respond to others as objects, they attempt to guide or nuance others' conceptions of themselves, and also change their own sense of self. Thus, "achieving a sense of self requires that one be able to make reflections both toward the other and toward one's own being as an object of one's own awareness."¹⁷⁶ A

¹⁷⁴ LaGory et al., "Homelessness and Affiliation," 212.

¹⁷⁵ Katherine M. Boydell, Paula Goering, and Tammy L. Morrell-Bellai, "Narratives of Identity: Representations of Self in People Who Are Homeless," *Qualitative Health Research* 10, no. 1 (2000): 26-38.

¹⁷⁶ Boydell et al., 27.

symbolic interactionist perspective posits that one's own self-understanding, as well as one's understanding of the social world, is formulated through interaction with others. All individuals have a social identity as well as a felt identity and one's sense of self is determined in dialogue with both. The authors' findings indicate that the experience of homelessness results in the desire to maintain past identities which are positive, to devalue one's present identity, and to create future identities. The participants devalued their present identities by distancing themselves from their homeless status and some even refused to acknowledge their homeless status at various points. Boydell et al. note the identity hierarchy within homelessness, in which homeless individuals often distance themselves from other homeless individuals considered to be beneath them. Finally, participants' future identities often included elements of transcendence, in which they reported how they will be in the future when they are out of their present situation. According to the authors, several individuals reported that in the future they hope to volunteer and help other homeless individuals. Jennifer and Briteny both mentioned their desire to volunteer and, after securing stable housing, Martha gave Christmas toys to children in the shelter. The authors conclude that "homelessness, although an event, is also a process. It is gradual and entails a great deal of loss. The accoutrements (meaningful work, relationships, and a place to call one's own) that are critical to helping individuals define themselves are lost. Homelessness poses a threat to identity."¹⁷⁷ The authors advocate that in light of such identity changes caregivers can aid the homeless by focusing on their strengths and engendering hope toward future selves.

As evidenced in Chapter 2, Jamie was able to maintain her identity and "to keep [her] perspective of who [she has] been in [her] entire life" through her job. It reminded

¹⁷⁷ Boydell et al., 35.

her, in her words, that she was not a “total loser.” Crystal, who was already in transition and leaving her daughter’s father, wondered who she would be in the shelter and how homelessness would change her identity. Caregivers can help clients to maintain positive aspects of their identity by demonstrating interest in the client’s past selves, no matter how distant. They can also help clients to transcend their homeless circumstance by aiding the client in constructing hopeful narratives toward becoming their future selves.

Shelterization

Changes in identity resulting from homelessness may, in part, result from the process of shelterization. Shelterization, a term coined by Sutherland and Locke’s 1936 study, is the process of adapting to shelter life and the related diminished sense of self.¹⁷⁸ In her research with homeless parents, predominantly homeless mothers, DeOllos defined five stages of shelterization. Both DeOllos’s rubric and the similar stages posited by Thomas L. Kuhlman in the psychological literature have tremendous import for the pastoral counseling services provided to the residents of Our House. For this reason, significant attention will be given to DeOllos’s theory of shelterization and the five stages. Stage one occurs at the time of intake and is labeled “I don’t really belong here.”¹⁷⁹ In this first stage, families adjust to shelter life and learn both the official and the unofficial rules of the house. Families who are homeless for the first time are confident at this point that their present experience will be their only experience with homelessness. They meet with case managers and attempt to convince shelter staff that they are distinct from other families, they do not intend to stay long, and their case is unique. At this point families are generally compliant with staff and are motivated to transcend their

¹⁷⁸ DeOllos, 21.

¹⁷⁹ DeOllos, 123.

circumstance. In addition, they identify more with their housed peers than with others in the shelter. Crystal typifies this stage as she distanced herself from homelessness and felt undeserving of shelter because she had a job with benefits as opposed to receiving food stamps.

The second stage, entitled “Why doesn’t someone help?” features a period of non-compliance. According to DeOllos families enter this stage about one week following admission to the shelter. They become angry with staff that their circumstance is not viewed as unique and are disillusioned that no one else seems to recognize that they are more like their domiciled peers. Case managers help families to replace lost records, such as identification, health records and social security cards as well as completing applications and endless paperwork toward securing public benefits. While I have observed this second stage in Our House residents, I do not believe that non-compliance sets in after only one week. Rather, for the episodically homeless, it happens after the “broken” feeling begins to subside and the end of their shelter stay nears, which for many occurs after about one and a half months in the shelter.

“Following the steps will get me out of here” is the third stage that is characterized by adaptation. During this third stage, as residents begin to adapt they recognize their homeless status but maintain a sense of agency and hope for the future. Their cooperation with shelter staff most likely increases and parents try to maintain feelings of normalcy within the family. Families are often in frequent contact with extended family and spend significant time with relatives outside the shelter. As my work is limited to the emergency shelter context, the residents exhibiting the third stage come from other shelters and have been homeless for some months. Lisa, perhaps, is an

example of this as she was homeless and living with friends while her children were living out of state with her oldest son. Upon entering the shelter, she was willing to comply as she understood her shelter stay to be her path out of homelessness, not into it.

Stage four, entitled “No matter what I do I can’t get out,” is characterized by withdrawal as shelter life takes on a routine and adults begin to identify with other homeless residents. They begin to place less pressure on shelter staff and accept more resource referrals from fellow residents. DeOllos notes that residents who were able to secure stable employment often did not enter stage four, but as such families move out and on, the resignation among the remaining families is likely to increase. Families are also likely to spend less time with relatives outside the shelter.

The fifth stage is one of resignation and aptly called “I guess this is home for now.” During this stage adults no longer seek the help of case managers and shelter staff and closely identify with other shelter residents. They begin to feel that others, including relatives and shelter staff, cannot relate to their problems as they have never been homeless. By this point, most adults have quit attending classes or job training programs and may be lax about attendance at mandatory activities. DeOllos notes that once a family has been to stage five they adapt much more quickly to any subsequent episodes of homelessness, as they have already undergone the shelterization process. Mary is a prime example of stage five as she felt at home in the shelter, identified with the R.A. who had served time, and, while she initially thought she would return to her mother’s home after one weekend in the shelter, found she liked shelter life. She isolated herself from her family and was living in a tent with her boyfriend at the time of the interview, over two years following her exit from the shelter.

As previously noted, it is important not to present such typologies as rigid, as the categories are not mutually exclusive. DeOllos writes, “Rather than progressing smoothly through Stage One to Stage Five, families seemed to fluctuate between stages. Some families regressed to earlier stages, while other families skipped stages.”¹⁸⁰ Therefore, clinicians are aided by assessing the present stage of families but must recognize that such assessment is quite fluid.

Depression

As mental illness is commonly associated with homelessness, we now turn to examine, from a sociological lens, depression among the homeless. While the residents of Our House typically do not present with Schizophrenia or other disorders commonly associated with homelessness, they often exhibit symptoms of depression which are, for some, quite severe. Mark LaGory, Ferri J. Ritchey and Jeff Mullis conducted a study of 150 shelter- and street-based homeless individuals to explore why homelessness causes greater distress for some than others and the value of social resources as compared to psychological resources.¹⁸¹ Utilizing the Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression (CES-D) scale in addition to other sociodemographic and life circumstance variables, the authors concluded that nearly 75% of the sample demonstrated significant levels of depressive symptomatology and 59% indicated “probable clinical caseness.”¹⁸² The authors determined that psychological resources, particularly a sense of mastery, mediate depressive symptoms better than social resources. This is not to say that the homeless do not have support networks; rather, the experience of homelessness is “so devastating that

¹⁸⁰ DeOllos, 140.

¹⁸¹ Mark LaGory, Ferris J. Ritchey, and Jeff Mullis, “Depression among the Homeless,” *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 31 (1990): 87-101.

¹⁸² LaGory et al., “Depression,” 95.

personal ties are almost ineffectual.”¹⁸³ Social supports cannot mediate against the effects of life circumstances and, in addition, the population’s social systems often possess very limited economic resources. Furthermore, the authors report that “younger persons, persons who have experienced greater numbers of undesirable life events, persons previously hospitalized for mental problems, persons with a limited sense of their own resourcefulness, and persons with less extensive social supports are much more vulnerable than others to the debilitating effects of the homeless condition.”¹⁸⁴ A significant body of research illustrates that the homeless are truly not disaffiliated; however, it is important to recognize that such social supports do not operate in the same manner as within the general population, as is true with regards to depression. As seven of the sixteen research partners cited past episodes of depression, it is important for clinicians to test LaGory’s et al. findings that psychological resources, such as sense of mastery, may mediate depression better than social support. Allowing clients to exercise mastery over their lives by limiting shelter rules and minimizing hierarchical case management and counseling may help to cultivate a sense of mastery in shelter residents.

Doubling-Up

Edward F. Vacha and Marguerite V. Marin concur with the findings of LaGory, Richey, and Mullis that the support networks of the homeless frequently lack the economic resources necessary to mediate the impact of the homeless individual’s life circumstances.¹⁸⁵ According to Vacha and Marin, the majority of the homeless is not living in shelters but is residing with friends and relatives, that is, “doubling-up.” By

¹⁸³ LaGory et al., “Depression,” 99.

¹⁸⁴ LaGory et al., “Depression,” 99.

¹⁸⁵ Edward F. Vacha and Marguerite V. Marin, “Doubling Up: Low Income Households Sheltering the Hidden Homeless,” *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare* 20 (1993): 25-41.

interviewing low-income residents of Spokane, Washington who had applied for assistance with their energy bills, the authors determined that 58% of respondents reported offering shelter to a friend or family member at some point in time.¹⁸⁶ Moreover, 80% had provided housing to someone for more than six months but less than one year.¹⁸⁷ They reported receiving little financial support or non-monetary contributions from those they sheltered. Most importantly, the “informal shelter providers” themselves had very limited economic resources which were taxed even further by the support offered to their homeless friends and family. Thirty-eight percent of informal shelter providers reported that they too were homeless in the past.¹⁸⁸ The authors recommend that as most families double up prior to moving into shelters, shelters often being seen as the last resort, these “informal shelter providers” would decrease their own risk of homelessness if they received aid to reduce the high cost of doubling up. This could be in the form of tax credits or subsidies. As previously mentioned, at least seven of the sixteen research partners did reside with family or friends prior to their shelter stay. The economic resources of such support networks is unknown, but one cannot help but wonder how shelters and the statistics on homelessness would be influenced were tax credits or subsidies offered to those who open up their homes to the homeless.

Evaluation of Current Shelter Practices and Recommendations for Best-Practices

Numerous studies aim to evaluate the efficacy of shelter programs for the homeless. Bahr examined various programs designed to rehabilitate the homeless, many of which involve treatment for alcoholism, but notes that the rehabilitation of the homeless has never been a high priority, in part because they are considered “multi-

¹⁸⁶ Vacha and Marin, 29.

¹⁸⁷ Vacha and Marin, 31.

¹⁸⁸ Vacha and Marin, 36.

problem men.”¹⁸⁹ However, much has changed since Bahr’s writing in 1973. In part, this is due to funding awarded through the Supportive Housing Demonstration Program as part of the Stewart B. McKinney Act of 1987 and funds awarded between 1987 and 1990 by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to create and operate emergency and transitional housing programs.¹⁹⁰

As with any service delivery effort, evaluation is essential to determine the efficacy of services and the experiences of service recipients. As emergency and transitional housing programs vary greatly, evaluations of two programs that closely resemble the Our House program will be included.¹⁹¹ Services offered by these two programs include budgeting classes, job training, leadership skills, counseling, parenting classes, house meetings and support groups. In his evaluation of Estival Place, a transitional housing facility in Memphis, Tennessee, Thomas A. Washington reports that residents considered budgeting, job training, and leadership skills classes to have had the greatest impact on their ability to maintain self-sufficiency.¹⁹² In Washington’s evaluation “all of the residents said that the counseling they received enhanced their self-esteem, taught them how to vent their anger, and introduced them to problem-solving techniques.”¹⁹³ Our House offers residents classes in financial literacy and parenting, and both individual and group counseling. We heard from Patricia how her counselor aided her in her ability to manage anger and from Jamie and Crystal how counseling helped

¹⁸⁹ Bahr, 241.

¹⁹⁰ Thomas A. Washington, “The Homeless Need More than Just a Pillow, They Need a Pillar: An Evaluation of a Transitional Housing Program,” *Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Human Services* 83 (2002): 183.

¹⁹¹ Thomas A. Washington; Sondra J. Fogel, “Moving Along: An Exploratory Study of Homeless Women with Children Using a Transitional Housing Program,” *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare* 24, no. 3 (1997): 113-33.

¹⁹² Thomas A. Washington, 185.

¹⁹³ Thomas A. Washington, 187.

foster healthy self-esteem. However, Our House does not offer job training or leadership skills. Research partners did not report help with problem-solving techniques, but this may be alleviated, as will be discussed in Chapter 5, by drawing on the wisdom of solution focused therapy.

In contrast, Sondra J. Fogel's findings indicate that individual counseling was not considered helpful in the transition toward self-sufficiency, but that the support group was effective. According to Fogel, "This group was successful, they said, not because it provided information toward self-sufficiency, but because it was a bonding experience."¹⁹⁴ As with any household, rules are necessary in the shelter context. In Fogel's study, the residents recognized the necessity of rules but complained when such rules got in the way of their own plans or agendas. Therefore, respondents consistently reported conflict, according to Fogel, whether in relation to shelter staff or within the house. Fogel raises an interesting query when she posits the question, "Did the rules in this House promote self-sufficiency in residents? Or did these rules produce patterns of behavior that were adaptive only to the transitional environment, a goodness-of-fit?"¹⁹⁵

As is evident in research partners' comments, rules often lead to conflict in the shelter and do impinge upon residents' plans and schedules. Therefore, Fogel's query is quite apt. Do shelter rules contribute to the growth of residents or do they function solely for the shelter environment? I cannot profess to know why some rules are in place or how staff understand their function; however, in Chapter 5 attention will be given to rules which seem to be go against the residents' ability to achieve self-sufficiency.

¹⁹⁴ Fogel, 123.

¹⁹⁵ Fogel, 131.

In response to both evaluations and theory construction, a significant portion of the literature offers implications for practice and ideal solutions for homelessness. First, according to Tracy and Stoecker's study, fifteen of the eighteen service providers included the construction of safe, affordable housing in their solutions.¹⁹⁶ Eight respondents indicated the need for job training skills and three service providers reported that the minimum wage must be increased. Many spoke to the need for further education as well as substance abuse treatment, and five informants indicated that the homeless need daily living skills. Finally, four respondents specifically stated a need for increased self-esteem among the homeless. I appreciate these suggestions as they seem to address both the structural and the personal causes of homelessness.

Jencks also posits some "partial solutions" to homelessness but states that adequate, stable housing is essential. Jencks writes, "Without stable housing, nothing else is likely to work."¹⁹⁷ Toward this end, due to the fact that strict and numerous rules often deter potential clients, shelters are more effective if each client has a private space. Jencks advocates raising cash benefits for homeless families and eradicating the childcare vs. work dilemma.¹⁹⁸ According to Jencks, single adults need additional education and job training skills, which may also necessitate government-run day-labor market. Jencks argues that services for the poor are requisite, but cautions that without evaluation such services are for naught. Jencks recommends providing the homeless with vouchers so that they may determine which services they require and consume services that they deem efficacious.

¹⁹⁶ Tracy and Stoecker.

¹⁹⁷ Jencks, 107.

¹⁹⁸ Single mothers are required to work while receiving welfare but then expend significant resources on childcare. Some of this issue has been ameliorated through programs such as GAIN, but affordable childcare is still lacking.

Following her participant-observation at two family shelters, DeOllos makes the following four recommendations for modified services. First, the main family shelter in DeOllos's study separated husbands and wives, and required that boys age seven and older remain with their fathers. DeOllos recommends accommodations that allow families to remain together. Truly this is one of the most unique aspects of Our House as residents are able to reside as a family in a private room, albeit small. Second, the shelter had congregate sleeping areas and therefore families had no privacy. Therefore, DeOllos recommends common rooms in which families can congregate and possibly invite family and friends to visit, but private sleeping quarters. Third, in DeOllos's assessment the shelter rules prohibited parents from making independent decisions regarding their family's welfare and often interfered with parents' ability to discipline their children. Thus, DeOllos advocates that, while maintaining the need for rules, parents be responsible for the discipline of their own children. While shelter staff rarely interfere in parenting, as noted again and again, shelter residents are sometimes in conflict over parenting and the discipline of each other's children. Finally, through participant-observation, DeOllos recognized that shelter staff differentiates themselves from residents, thus creating barriers and divisions. DeOllos indicates that staff needs to be sensitized to the impact of their behaviors, which may help shelter residents to continue to identify with staff for longer periods of time. As previously noted, by stage four residents seek help not from staff but from fellow residents and identify more with the homeless population than domiciled peers. In my experience collaboration and mutual aid among the residents can be positive, yet, although she does not provide examples, DeOllos implies otherwise. Through my participant observation, I also experienced an

us/them dynamic in which, as a shelter resident, I experienced a division from shelter staff. By being locked out of the shelter after four p.m., sweating in the face of the locked thermostat, and hearing about residents' frustration with staff, I concur with DeOllos that staff need to be sensitized regarding how their behavior and attitudes impacts shelter residents.

Finally, according to Bahr, the greatest impediment to rehabilitating the homeless is the proliferation of the homeless stigma and the manner in which homeless individuals have internalized “dehumanized,” “subhuman,” and “derelict” identities.¹⁹⁹ Drawing on the story of *The Frog Prince* as a metaphor, Bahr contends that the homeless individual, although only part frog, soon comes to believe he is full frog as a result of the treatment he receives. He begins to see himself what is communicated in the faces of others—police, welfare clerks, passersby: he is a frog. Those offering services are supposedly “frog changers,” the ones who with just one kiss have the power to turn each frog to a prince. However, too many service-providers come to believe that it is the exception to the rule that the frog turns into a prince, and thus all frogs are treated as frogs. Bahr argues that the homeless must be shown and convinced of their “non-frog-ness.”²⁰⁰ This requires change on the part of service providers, the system, and a certain motivation or willingness to see on the part of the homeless themselves. Research partners' numerous comments about not feeling as though they were treated with respect supports Bahr's contention. Furthermore, Bahr's work illustrates how service providers and the homeless themselves must recognize their “non-frog-ness.” Therefore, when one feels that she is

¹⁹⁹ Bahr, 290.

²⁰⁰ Bahr, 291.

not treated with respect it may reflect both the treatment by the service provider as well as the homeless individual's self-concept or –esteem.

CHAPTER 4 EVERYBODY IS SOMEBODY: PASTORAL THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

Introduction

In addition to the sources of authority found within the social sciences, theological and pastoral theological resources are essential dialogue partners within any exercise in practical theology. The chapter extends the review of literature by providing an overview of liberation theology, the theology of Martin Luther King, Jr., a pastoral theology of economics, and theory related to the practice of intercultural pastoral care and counseling. Each overview concludes with assessment of the values and limits of these literatures with regard to care and counseling in situations of homelessness.

Liberation Theology

Liberation theology is an essential dialogue partner for any exploration into the lives of people who are marginalized and oppressed. Beginning in the 1960s, liberation theology was an ecclesial response to the populist governments of numerous Latin American countries which, in an effort to achieve “national security,” marginalized those who challenged those governments. The Second Vatican Council provided a rich atmosphere for theologians to dialogue with social theory in an effort to analyze the causes of underdevelopment and to articulate a call for liberation. This section examines some of liberation theology’s core tenets; in an effort not to delimit our dialogue with liberation theology to the “founding fathers,” I chose texts written by both Latin American and Black liberation theologians, ranging from the seminal work of Gustavo Gutiérrez to the womanist theology of Monica Coleman.¹ This section explores how

¹ The following dialogue with liberation theology emerges from my own reading of the following five texts: Gustavo Gutiérrez’s *A Theology of Liberation*, James H. Cone’s *God of the Oppressed*, Leonardo and

liberation theology begins with praxis, presents a preferential option for the poor, draws upon the social sciences, advocates revolution and the abolition of the status quo, seeks to enact the historical project today, and embraces the living Christ.

Starting From Praxis

Perhaps the most defining aspect of liberation theology as for practical theology is its attention to praxis. According to Gutiérrez, the classical functions of theology are “theology as wisdom and theology as rational knowledge.”² Firmly grounded in the tenets and assertions of the Second Vatican Council, liberation theology centers on the notion that praxis is the foundation of all theology. A concept resulting from Hegelian philosophy, praxis refers to the balance forged between two opposing dialectics, in this case theory and practice. Thus, if praxis is the foundation of all theology, then “theology must be critical reflection on humankind.”³ Liberation theology recognizes that the life and practice of the church does not strictly emerge from doctrine and orthodoxy; rather, pastoral activity both reflects and informs theology just as theology both reflects and informs praxis. Liberation theology does not exist parallel to the history of the world. It is enmeshed and embedded within pastoral activity, yet always with a prophetic lure. “It is to reflect with a view to action which transforms the present.”⁴ Because theology is of the world and not separate from the world, James H. Cone contends that our “ideas about God are the reflections of social conditioning.”⁵ As Cone illustrates, those who are well fed will find hunger to be a theological issue, rather than a physical issue, and will be less

Clodovis Boff's *Introducing Liberation Theology*, Ivan Petrella's *The Future of Liberation Theology: An Argument and Manifesto*, and Monica A. Coleman's *Making a Way Out of No Way: A Womanist Theology*.

² Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics and Salvation*, trans. Sister Caridad Inda and John Eagleson (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1973), 4.

³ Gutiérrez, 9.

⁴ Gutiérrez, 12.

⁵ James H. Cone, *God of the Oppressed* (New York: Seabury, 1975), 44.

concerned by Jesus' command to feed the hungry.⁶ For this reason, liberation theology is grounded in a preferential option for the poor.

Preferential Option for the Poor

If theology both informs and emerges from praxis then it cannot be constructed in the ivory tower. The pursuit of liberation theology entails a "being with," a commitment to sharing in the life of the marginalized and oppressed, a solidarity with the poor. According to Leonardo Boff and Clodovis Boff, this is the first step of liberation theology, a step that is "pre-theological."⁷ It is not enough simply to reflect on the situation of the poor and oppressed; rather, one must share in the experience to whatever extent possible. Boff and Boff delineate three levels of contact with the poor: visits to base communities to engage in pastoral work or advisement; "*alternating* periods of scholarly work ... with periods of practical work;"⁸ and making a permanent home among the oppressed. Engagement of this kind necessarily precedes any type of socio-analytical, hermeneutical, or practical reflection requisite for theological construction.

Gutiérrez also calls for a shared existence with the poor in which the neighbor is understood not as the individual recipient of acts of charity, but as masses, the marginalized collective. Seeing God in one's neighbor is not the individualism of an I-Thou relationship. Rather, our encounter with God is found through relationship with all those who shall inherit the Kingdom. Gutiérrez calls for a shared existence with the poor, but with the aim of conscientization. Borrowing Paulo Freire's term, Gutiérrez argues that the liberation of the oppressed can only be achieved when it is their lips and hearts

⁶ Cone, 52.

⁷ Leonardo Boff and Clodovis Boff, *Introducing Liberation Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1987), 22.

⁸ Boff and Boff, 23.

demanding change. Therefore, the task of liberation theology is not to address the oppressors, but to participate actively with the oppressed so that they, through raised consciousness, can “be the protagonists of their own liberation.”⁹ “To be with the oppressed is to be against the oppressor.”¹⁰ Writing decades later following the fall of socialism, Ivan Petrella echoes the role theologians need to play in assisting communities in a grassroots emergence of liberation. According to Petrella, historical projects of liberation result from a dialectical process in which the theologian learns from a community and provides essential knowledge and resources, while the community learns from the theologian and carries out the historical project.

Understanding what it means to be in solidarity with the poor and oppressed necessitates defining what “the poor” signifies. Poverty is not determined by one’s socioeconomic status. The poor are not comprised of individuals living below the nationally determined “poverty line.” The poor are not simply the unemployed or the proletariat, a designation made popular by Marx. Cone writes, “The poor are the oppressed and the afflicted, those who cannot defend themselves against the powerful. They are the last and the least, the hungry and the thirsty, the unclothed and the strangers, the sick and the captives.”¹¹ The poor are unemployed or underemployed, a disposable reserve at the hand of the rich and ruling classes. Yet, according to Gutiérrez, such poverty produces a way of being in the world that results for some in “vast human, cultural, and religious wealth.”¹² Constructing a definition of poverty cannot be done without proper attention to the relational aspects of impoverishment. The poor are not

⁹ Gutiérrez, 67.

¹⁰ Gutiérrez, 173.

¹¹ Cone, 79.

¹² Gutiérrez, xxiii.

impoverished by any action of their own. They are made poor in relation, as a result of their connection to the “haves.” And it is for this reason that numerous forms of aid to the poor only increase dependence, whether on an individual or a global scale. Grounded in an exegesis of Luke 6:20, the poor are blessed because the Kingdom of God, enacted on earth, has begun. Such blessing is not an eschatological reward for an earthly suffering. Therefore, being in solidarity with the poor entails an acceptance of the evil that is the divide between the haves and the have-nots, and a commitment to eradicating that breach through liberation today. The preferential option for the poor is not because they are blessed by what they do not have, but because of their relation to those who have. It is because “the last are first” in God’s eyes that we are required to enact a preferential option for the poor.

The Role of Social Sciences

Liberation theology is grounded in praxis. It is of the world rather than separate from the world. For this reason, liberation theology draws wisdom from the social sciences in its pursuit of abolishing the status quo. According to Ivan Petrella, liberation theology has traditionally understood the role of the social sciences in two ways, which Petrella terms the canonical view and the marginal view. Petrella contends that the liberation theology of Clodovis Boff exemplifies the canonical view in which the social sciences are used to understand the root causes of oppression. Boff advocates a four stage methodology which, as previously stated, is grounded first in a pre-theological commitment to solidarity with the oppressed. This stage is followed by a socio-analytical mediation into the wisdom of the social sciences, a hermeneutical mediation exploring the wisdom of the Bible and the Christian tradition, and a practical mediation articulating

calls to action. Boff argues that social theory such as Marxism, perhaps the most formative social theory for liberation theology, is an “instrument” that should not be esteemed in the same way as the gospel. Petrella is unsatisfied with the canonical view as it creates a divide between theology and the social sciences. That is to say, wisdom from the social sciences is relegated to socio-analytical mediation, and is never considered from a theological perspective. Writing in critical response to Boff, Jung Mo Sung, according to Petrella, is an advocate of the marginal view.¹³ Sung attempts to bridge the divide between theology and the social sciences, yet falls short by not formulating concrete alternatives of action. According to Petrella, one cannot denounce the current economic orthodoxy and stop without postulating alternatives. Petrella thus constructs his own position, grounded in a call for the development of historical projects. Rather than simply using theology and the social sciences as a means of interpretation and toward the formulation of incomplete calls for action, Petrella draws on both theology and social theory in order to articulate how to develop historical projects -- a topic to which we will return shortly.

Cone also warns against a potential misappropriation of the social sciences. According to Cone, there is a danger in accepting the interpretations of “sociologists of knowledge” who construct “intellectual categories that were not created from” the experiences of the oppressed, in this case the “black experience itself.”¹⁴ Although Cone does not belabor this point, he cautions that the lived theology of the oppressed is not accurately understood if interpreted through social scientific lenses constructed by those

¹³ Ivan Petrella, *The Future of Liberation Theology: An Argument and Manifesto* (Aldershot, Hants, England: Ashgate, 2004), 30, citing Jung Mo Sung, *Economia: Tema Ausente en la Teologia de la Liberacion* (San Jose, Costa Rica: DEI, 1994).

¹⁴ Cone, 124.

in power. Gutiérrez also criticizes Latin American social scientists and others who only study problems from the perspectives of those in power, from the viewpoints of the dominating, developed countries. Again, a preferential option for the poor and oppressed is the starting point if theology is to be liberative and aid in the development of historical projects.

Abolition of the Status Quo

Although the term “historical projects” is one employed repeatedly by Petrella, the basic concept is foundational to liberation theology and is present in each of these authors’ writings. Liberation theology aims not simply to name oppressive structures but to enact liberation, to usher in the Kingdom of God, today. This is reflected in Gutiérrez’s doctrine of salvation, which stresses the achievement of the Kingdom in the present life before the life beyond. Salvation takes on a here and now quality that “is a cure for the sin in this life” as well as something to strive for in the life beyond.¹⁵ Therefore, God’s saving grace is a part of history, and the pursuit of such salvation requires historical projects. Historical projects are “models of political and economic organization that would replace an unjust status quo” and they are constructed through the engagement of theology and social theory.¹⁶ Historical projects are a continuation of the work of creation. It is through historical projects that humans become co-creators with God. The realization of such historical projects is the promise of the prophets. The Kingdom of God is in our midst and entails the liberation of all creation.

Therefore, liberation theology aims to recognize God’s action in history and God’s preferential option for the poor in order to challenge the existing order. Writing

¹⁵ Gutiérrez, 84.

¹⁶ Petrella, vii.

from the perspective of black liberation theology, Cone draws on the Exodus-Sinai tradition in order to construct a liberative and practical theology for the oppressed and the enslaved -- a theology that reflects the black experience. Cone utilizes the Exodus story to indicate how God chooses the slaves over the slave masters and elects Israel not in spite of her bondage but because of it. God acted in history to liberate the enslaved and eradicate the oppression of the status quo. Cone questions "Who is Jesus Christ for Us Today?" in order to exemplify how, through Christ's presence among them, black Christians can suffer hardship and oppression six days a week, and on the seventh know that through Christ God breaks into history in the struggle for freedom.

Also writing from the perspective of black liberation, but from a womanist position, Monica Coleman evidences God's liberating action in history through a salvation that "makes a way out of no way." Drawing on a process metaphysic, Coleman contends that God calls us into the future by offering possibilities that proffer survival in the midst of oppression. God presents possibilities and through human agency we are lured toward justice. Coleman illustrates how, despite God's continuous participation in history, liberation from all evil is not possible in this world. As salvation is both temporal and beyond this life, historical projects offer a limited liberation. When true liberation is not possible, God offers survival and quality of life through participation in creative transformation. Consonant with liberation theology, salvation in Coleman's thought is not an individual achievement. Salvation is a communal aim. Therefore, making a way out of no way is a communal endeavor. It is furthered through acts of teaching and healing, foundational components of creative transformation, which aim toward the liberation of the community and may not always be experienced as liberation of the individual.

Petrella also advocates an abolition of the status quo through the development of historical projects. According to Petrella, by failing to adequately draw upon both theology and social theory, liberation theologians achieved denunciation but not the annunciation of new social order. Petrella attributes this in part to an inability to see the “alternative pluralisms” contained in such institutions as democracy and capitalism. By constructing monolithic understandings of these institutions, liberation theology was unable to work within existing social order toward revolutionary ends and thus acted in opposition. Thus, Petrella calls for an institutional imagination which, through a postmodern lens, is able to recognize the complexity of institutions toward the development and enactment of historical projects. Petrella stops short of imagining any specifics of such projects, unfortunately.

Embracing the Living Christ

No presentation of liberation theology would be complete without explicating the role of the Bible and specifically the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. Liberation theology asserts that Jesus Christ through his “death and resurrection transforms the universe and makes it possible for the person to reach fulfillment as a human being.”¹⁷ Christ fulfills the promise of the prophets and makes salvation available to all humanity as the new chosen people. Christ liberates us from sin, understood by Gutiérrez as “the negation of love” which is a political, communal reality more than something private and limited to the individual. Christ is the embodiment of God’s historical action and the preferential option for the poor.

Boff and Boff explore the task of hermeneutical mediation in order to construct a hermeneutics of liberation that reads the scriptures as the Bible of the poor. A

¹⁷ Gutiérrez, 85.

hermeneutics of liberation is open to God's continuing revelation, and reads the Bible as a construction from the context out of which it emerged. Furthermore, a hermeneutics of liberation reads the Bible for "application" more than "explanation."¹⁸ Boff and Boff advocate a reading of the Bible that focuses on the political and social contexts in a manner that is applicable to the oppression experienced today. For this reason liberation theologians favor the following Biblical books: Exodus, the Prophets, the Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, and Revelation.¹⁹

In contrast to many of her womanist sisters, Coleman's liberating theology argues that the saving work of God is distinct from that of Jesus. She makes this move in order to construct a postmodern theology applicable to religious perspectives that do not consider Jesus to be divine. This is uncommon, if not unheard of, within liberation theology. However, Coleman reviews the literature of other womanist scholars, the majority of whom advocate a synchronicity between theology and Christology. Emerging from such high Christology, many black Christian women see all divine acts as those of Jesus, and Jesus as the actor who makes a way out of no way.

Such high Christology is echoed in Cone's theology. According to Cone, blacks are not concerned with the homoousia dilemma. Jesus is God. Jesus is the answer to suffering and oppression. Jesus is the one who makes a way out of no way. Again drawing on the Exodus tradition, Cone affirms a Black Christ who, through his Jewishness, is connected to God's liberation of the Israelites from Egypt. Christ's blackness makes him one with black people as they seek liberation from oppression,

¹⁸ Boff and Boff, 33.

¹⁹ Boff and Boff, 35.

servitude, pain and dispossession. Jesus is the ground of hope for the promise of liberation and the assurance that the struggle for freedom is embedded in God's creation.

Liberation Theology and Homelessness

In constructing a dialogue between liberation theology and the experience of homelessness, four foundational conversations emerge. First, according to liberation theology, the poor are not impoverished by their own actions but are made poor in relation as a result of their connection to the wealthy. As is evident in the comments of the research partners as well as in the review of social scientific literature, it is commonly believed that the poverty of homelessness is the result of poor character. At the same time, most researchers argue persuasively that homelessness results from structural oppressions. This is a dualism that needs to be avoided if we are to recognize the relational aspects of homelessness. Caregivers and careseekers alike need education about the relational causation of poverty -- a power dynamic that caregivers often are loathe to accept. Unconscious or unexamined knowledge of the relational aspects of homelessness often leads to charity rather than justice -- a caregiver who gives a second-hand coat to a homeless child but fails to examine how her own warmth relates to that child's cold.

Second, according to Boff and Boff, those seeking justice for the poor must share in the life of the poor. Research partners supported this assertion in their criticism of the volunteers who failed to engage in fellowship and the staff who forgot that the thermostat was locked on "sweltering." Conversely, research partners praised the volunteer who talked with them about bra sizes, provided hair cuts and hygienic resources, and treated residents with dignity -- this volunteer was open to sharing in their experience. Therefore,

both pastoral caregivers and pastoral counselors do a disservice when they attempt to liberate from without rather than from within. One way that Christians can enact this preferential option for the poor is by spending time at Our House. Time spent “hanging out” and engaging in the lives of shelter residents is just as important as “serving” the homeless through the provision of meals and shelter maintenance. According to liberation theology, the liberation of the homeless must come from the homeless; however, caregivers have knowledge and access to resources to share. But this cannot be done unless caregivers are willing to spend time among the homeless.

Third, liberation theologians warn against adopting social scientific belief systems constructed by those in power that do not emerge from lived experience. It is precisely for this reason that we engage the practice of pastoral care and counseling in the homeless context. Applying psychological or pastoral counseling theory constructed for other contexts to the experience of homelessness is a dangerous endeavor. Only theory constructed from the experience of the oppressed should be utilized in work with the oppressed. Social scientific theories of homelessness that fail to take into account the structural causes are constructed by those in power and do not emerge from lived experience. The same is true of value-laden clinical approaches that aim to subjugate homeless clients to the present status quo. It has been my intention in selecting sources of authority to avoid the inclusion of such non-liberating theories and research.

Finally, the experience of homelessness offers one corrective or constructive critique of liberation theology. According to Coleman, salvation is not an individual achievement. Salvation is a communal aim. Therefore, making a way out of no way is a communal endeavor and may not always be experienced as liberation of the individual.

However, many research partners reported numerous strained or severed relationships, many feel a profound lack of support, and isolation and shame are common experiences among the homeless. Therefore, when Anthony spoke about God making a way for him, I believe he is seeking the “salvation” of his immediate community -- he and his children. Persons experiencing homelessness fare better when they have a communal context, but it is their own liberation that they seek. Therefore, in order to continue fostering hope, caregivers need to recognize that “making a way out of no way” is necessary for the entire homeless population as well as each individual. One way that this can be achieved is by providing care that is both individualized and communal. Persons experiencing homelessness need individual attention. They need to be valued for their uniqueness and treated as an individual child of God. However, they also need community and the knowledge that they are not alone in their struggle. Providing both individual and group counseling is one way that “salvation” can be recognized as both an individual and a communal aim.

The Writings and Theology of Martin Luther King, Jr.

Martin Luther King, Jr. is most notably remembered as a prophetic orator and a champion of integration and the fight for racial equality. Based on his understanding of the interrelatedness of humanity -- the idea that when one is oppressed, all suffer -- King was not solely concerned with the plight of his African American brothers and sisters. King’s battle was for the dignity and economic security of all humankind and for this reason he serves as an exemplary dialogue partner for this exercise in practical theology. In particular, the following three themes from King’s theology and philosophy will be

examined: the role of agape love; humanity's interrelatedness; and, most importantly, King's theology of "somebodyness."

In order to better understand King's use of agape, it is first necessary to note his philosophy of nonviolent resistance, as agape is the central tenet of this philosophy. Made famous by Mohandas Gandhi, nonviolent resistance responds to physical force with soul force rather than retaliating against oppression with violence. The goal of nonviolent resistance is not to overcome or defeat the oppressor, but to create community and understanding. The forces of nonviolent resistance are directed toward the system rather than the individual persons who perpetuate systemic evil. As such, nonviolent resistance is not passive but rather seeks to create a beloved community through the enactment of agape.

Thus, agape is central to the philosophy of nonviolent resistance. In distinction from other Greek words for love, namely *eros* and *philia*, agape love is most similar to the love God has for all God's children. It is a non-discriminating love. Agape does not distinguish friend from enemy, and requires *love* rather than *like* of one's oppressors. It is what Jesus meant when he stated "love your enemies." King wrote, "When one rises to love on this level, he loves men not because he likes them, not because their ways appeal to him, but he loves every man because God loves him."²⁰ It would be ridiculous to ask the oppressed to like their oppressors, but to love them is to allow God's love for all to be manifest in one's heart. Agape is benevolent love that seeks nothing in return. Furthermore, agape love is at the center of any movement for change. It is a creating and

²⁰ Martin Luther King, Jr., "Love, Law, and Civil Disobedience," in *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, ed. James Melvin Washington (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991), 46.

redeeming love that works toward the construction of the beloved community while naming the evil forces in opposition. According to Garth Baker-Fletcher, “King viewed agape as the energizing force that enabled the unification of all human beings into a community, the transformation of a robbed dignity into a new sense of self-respect, and a sturdy and resistant quality of hope.”²¹

King’s understanding of agape also directly influenced his philosophy of the interrelatedness of humanity, the second of three themes. Agape is an other-oriented love. It is a love for the sake of the neighbor, not for one’s own sake. Agape is born from the need of the oppressor, not from the need of the oppressed, but at the same time recognizes the interrelatedness of the oppressor and the oppressed. Harm against one’s brother is truly harm against oneself. This is evident in the oft-repeated quote from King that “We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.”²² Agape is the recognition of our interrelated nature. It is a love for the sake of the other.

King’s understanding of the interdependence of all humanity was deeply rooted in his understanding of the philosophy of personalism. King was a student of L. Harold DeWolf, from whom he learned that the greatest value of the self lies not in individual achievement but in participation within the interdependent communal context. Personalism also greatly influenced King’s understanding of the inherent dignity and worth of all people. Thus, three additional points are worth noting about King’s philosophy of interrelatedness. First, in his sermon “The Three Dimensions of A Complete Life,” King described the “triangle” of personality. The first dimension of life,

²¹ Garth Baker-Fletcher, *Somebodyness: Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Theory of Dignity* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 135.

²² Martin Luther King, Jr., *Why We Can’t Wait* (New York: Signet Classic, 2000), 65.

also known as length of life, concerns the individual's vocation and calling – her *raison d'être*. The second dimension broadens this concern to all humanity. King stated, "I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be. This is the way our world is made. No individual or nation can stand out boasting of being independent. We are interdependent."²³ This dimension encourages I-Thou relationships and recognizes our "inescapable mutuality." Finally, the third dimension is directed "upward" toward God. In doing so, the individual will be empowered with hope, resiliency, and the ability to transcend despair. Thus, King's theological anthropology is grounded in a profound understanding of our relation to both God and humanity.

Second, King's understanding of interrelatedness also provided a foundation for his theological cosmology. King often referenced the famous John Donne quotation that "no man is an island, entire of itself," as this quotation supported King's assertion that the structures of the universe and reality are inherently interdependent.²⁴ King noted how scientific and technological advancements contributed to the geographical unity of the world; however, he challenged his readers to recognize the spiritual and moral oneness of brotherhood. This thought is also evident when he writes

To the degree that I harm my brother, no matter what he is doing to me, to that extent I am harming myself. For example, white men often refuse federal aid to education in order to avoid giving the Negro his rights; but because all men are brothers they cannot deny Negro children without harming their own. They end, all efforts to the contrary, by hurting themselves. Why is this? Because men are brothers. If you harm me, you harm yourself.²⁵

²³ Martin Luther King, Jr., "The Dimensions of a Complete Life," in *The Measure of a Man* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 48-49.

²⁴ Baker-Fletcher, 74.

²⁵ Martin Luther King, Jr., *Stride Toward Freedom: The Montgomery Story* (New York: Harper and Row, 1958), 106.

According to King the universe is inherently interconnected in both material and spiritual means; therefore, justice does not exist for one until justice exists for all.

Lastly, King frequently noted how the “jet age” and technological advancements provided a new connectivity of oppressed persons throughout the world. King himself traveled to India with his wife and wrote about the poverty he witnessed on the streets of Bombay. He watched with fellow African Americans in the 1960s as colonized African countries regained their freedom. He believed that the destiny of America and the American Negro is directly connected to the destiny of the oppressed in Asia, Africa, and the rest of the globe. In his 1961 speech “The American Dream,” King proclaimed, “As long as there is poverty in this world, no man can be totally rich even if he has a billion dollars. As long as diseases are rampant and millions of people cannot expect to live more than twenty or thirty years, no man can be totally healthy, even if he just got a clean bill of health from the finest clinic in America.”²⁶ Simply stated, King saw the struggle for freedom to be freedom of all, regardless of race, nationality, religion or creed. And he longed for the American Negro to live as the example of how, through nonviolent resistance, freedom could be won for all. King wrote, “Life’s piano can only produce the melodies of brotherhood when it is recognized that the black keys are as basic, necessary, and beautiful as the white keys.”²⁷

Perhaps the most relevant theme from King’s writing for the topic at hand is found in his theology of “somebodyness.” At age six, King learned firsthand the evils of racism when told by the parents of his white playmate that they could no longer play together. Upset, he sought counsel from his mother and was told the following: “You

²⁶ Washington, 210.

²⁷ Baker-Fletcher, 158.

must never feel that you are less than anybody else. You must always feel that you are somebody.”²⁸ King internalized his mother’s wisdom and constructed a theology of somebodiness which posits the inherent dignity and worth of all peoples. First, it is important to understand the context from which King’s theology emerged. In his article “Facing the Challenge of a New Age,” King asserts that “a new social order is being born.”²⁹ The world of colonization and imperialization is dying and a new world order is to come. Under slavery the African American was considered no more than an object – a “thing to be used.” In his famous interview with *Playboy* magazine King spoke of the way that the South “thingified” the Negro, depersonalizing him and oppressing him on the basis of racial inferiority. However, for the African American, a major turning point occurred following the Supreme Court’s *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision. This decision enacted the doctrine of separate-but-equal, which freed the African American physically, but, according to King, enslaved him in a new mental slavery. African Americans continued to be kept separate from whites, but they were not treated as equals. And the result was a true loss of faith in self. He adopted the white man’s beliefs and accepted the theory of his inferiority. But then, according to King, something began to change. The Negro began to travel more, gain some economic agency, and achieve literacy.

Such changes in the Negro’s existence, coupled with a profound belief in the love of God, marked the end of what King termed the second period of race relations in America and allowed the Negro to feel that he was somebody. King writes, “The Negro masses began to re-evaluate themselves, and the Negro came to feel that he was *somebody*. His religion revealed to him that God loves all his children, and that the basic

²⁸ Baker-Fletcher, xiv.

²⁹ Washington, 135.

thing about a man is not ‘his specificity but his fundamentum.’”³⁰ King infers that rather than be defined by one’s specificity, the color of one’s skin or the texture of one’s hair, one’s true worth is defined by one’s fundamentum -- that she is fundamentally a beloved child of God.

This leads us to explore in greater depth the theological roots of somebodyness. As previously noted, King believed that somebodyness is achieved simply by being a child of God and made in God’s image. However, Baker-Fletcher contends that the theological roots of somebodyness result from the influences of Boston Personalism, his family upbringing, and King’s understanding of the *imago dei*. Baker-Fletcher illustrates how King, in a sermon entitled “Lost Sheep,” draws on the parable of the lost sheep to affirm the inherent dignity and worth of all God’s children. According to King, God “stamped on all of his children a seal of preciousness.”³¹ Therefore, not only are we made in the image of God but we are all precious in God’s sight for God will seek out even the one lost sheep. King stated

The God this parable talks about tells me that the ‘NoD’ is just as significant as the PhD. The God that this parable talks about tells me that the man who’s been to ‘Nohouse’ is as significant as the man who’s been to Morehouse. So don’t worry where you live and who you are, you are somebody because you are God’s child. He stamped dignity and worth on all of his children. And whenever we see this something happens in our souls that causes us to stand up because we know we are somebody.³²

In an interview with Merv Griffin, King further developed his theology of somebodyness by elaborating the following four tenets: “an internal change in the psyche of the Negro, a sense of pride, an ability to stand up, and the feeling of being a ‘man.’”³³

³⁰ Baker-Fletcher, 48.

³¹ Baker-Fletcher, 156.

³² Baker-Fletcher, 157.

³³ Baker-Fletcher, 156.

In his address before the Fellowship of the Concerned in 1961, King spoke of the changes in the Negro's psyche. He stated, "The Negro has a new sense of dignity, a new self-respect and new determination. He has reevaluated his own intrinsic worth."³⁴ King also wrote of a psychological liberation toward increased pride and self-worth. He wrote, "There is such a thing as a desegregated mind. We must no longer allow the outer chains of an oppressive society to shackle our minds. With courage and fearlessness we must set out daringly to stabilize our egos. This alone will give us a confirmation of our roots and a validation of our worth."³⁵ King encouraged a mental liberation from the "thingification" of the past so that one might have the courage to stand up to the oppressor through soul force and nonviolent resistance. King dignified the worth of all labor, stating that as long as a street sweeper performs his job with the passion of Michaelangelo or Beethoven, his labor is to be respected and is of worth. In his infamous sermon "The Drum Major Instinct," King asked not to be remembered by his degrees, his awards or his Nobel Prize; rather, he asked that he be remembered as someone who tried to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and "give his life serving others."³⁶

King's Theology and Homelessness

First, King's theology of somebodyness has profound implications for the homeless individual. According to King, a person's value is in her "fundamentum" – her inherent, ontological worth as a human and a child of God. In a society where one's value is largely determined by what one does, that is to say one's productivity in the workplace, one's paycheck, and one's material achievement, King's message flies in the face of the American ethos. The idea that you are somebody as a result of your being rather than

³⁴ Washington, 44.

³⁵ Baker-Fletcher, 158.

³⁶ Washington, 367.

your doing can be a liberating conviction for a person experiencing homelessness.

Moreover, according to King, all work is equal whether one is a street sweeper or a C.E.O. As homelessness can greatly erode one's self-esteem and self-worth, the reminder that all work is of value can be extremely therapeutic. Jennifer, Susan, Briteny and others named their shame in the face of feeling "thingified." Therefore, an essential task of caring for the homeless is to remind them of their fundamentum.

Second, King's notions of agape and the interrelatedness of all humanity speak directly to the caregiver. According to King, if I harm my neighbor I am harming myself, as we are all interconnected. We operate as a network of mutuality, and what impacts one inherently impacts all. Caregivers who are able to operate from this theological ethic will bring greater empathy and understanding to their caregiving. If one of God's children goes hungry or sleeps on the street, then all of God's children suffer. Therefore, caring for the homeless individuals and families in one shelter, in one city, in one country, is a way of caring for all God's children. Likewise, denying the humanity of one homeless individual or family in one shelter, in one city, in one country, is denying the ontological worth of all God's children. In conjunction with the relational nature of poverty as evidenced in liberation theology, the notion of humanity's interrelatedness compels caregivers to understand their direct role in and connection to homelessness.

Homelessness negatively impacts the housed in numerous ways. As evidenced in Chapter 3, family and friends often open their homes to loved ones experiencing homelessness. Doubling up is frequently to the financial and emotional detriment of those opening their homes as they rarely have adequate resources to provide for both themselves and their guests. In 2009, many homeowners experienced decline in the value

of their homes and encountered difficulty when attempting to refinance. This was due to the astronomical number of foreclosures, which resulted in middle class homelessness. Although the culprit is the economy rather than homeless individuals and families, in this case, both the homeless and the housed suffered. Finally, the housed suffer from hubris when they falsely believe that their material existence makes them more “human” than their homeless brothers and sisters. By viewing homeless individuals as lazy, mentally ill, or addicted, the housed often falsely believe themselves immune to such suffering – a belief which research partners like Wrakishia are eager to dispute.

Lastly, the experience of homelessness also speaks to King’s theology in two fundamental ways. King wrote from a context of great racial oppression in which the oppressor and the oppressed were clearly demarcated simply by the color of their skin. This is not to say that there were not white advocates in the struggle for liberation, but rather that, systemically, the oppressor was known and readily identifiable. In contrast, those experiencing homelessness are challenged to identify the oppressor due to the systemic complexity, as well as the personal experiences, which produce the homeless experience. The ambiguity of the oppressor makes it more difficult for the homeless person to understand and overcome her circumstance. This often results in self-blame or other-blame, neither of which identifies the true oppressor. Therefore, while King was able to speak publicly to the oppressor, to serve as a leader for all African Americans seeking to overcome, homeless advocacy requires speaking to a myriad of power structures from the U.S. government to the employer who upon finding out his employee was homeless laid him off. In addition, caregivers themselves may be viewed as the oppressors. Jennifer, Wrakishia, and other research partners shared how they wanted

those with material wealth, those in power, to accept that they too could be homeless.

This requires an attitude adjustment on the part of caregivers in order to humble themselves and accept responsibility, while at the same time helping homeless persons to understand the complex causes of homelessness.

In addition, King called for the construction of the beloved community in an effort to bring together all those suffering and all those in pain toward equality, transformation and wholeness. However, those experiencing homelessness are often relegated from their previous communities. As previously mentioned while dialoguing with liberation theology, it is difficult for homeless individuals to put the community's needs and salvation before their own. This is because their individual power has been taken from them, they have been forced out of networks of support and mutuality, and they are struggling to survive over and against the oppressive forces of the dominant communities. Their own basic, individual needs are often unmet, which at times results in feelings of entitlement and, in severe cases, a hyperindividualism. While it is clear from the research partners' reports that communities of support do form, they are largely for survival rather than liberation. Therefore, in order to construct a beloved community a la King, it is the job of the caregivers, the persons in power, to leverage their power toward the cultivation of an equitable community. This first requires caregivers to recognize the positions of power from which they operate. Second, while it is impossible to relinquish such power, caregivers can work to cultivate more equitable relationships by sharing power with the disempowered. In this way they will be able to follow the lead of homeless individuals in the construction of a supportive, empowering, and liberating community. Such community construction is done by fostering connection among

homeless individuals as well as between the homeless and those in service positions. The beloved community includes the “haves” alongside the “have-nots” in a manner that dissolves the distinction between them. It is evident in the research partners’ report that empowerment comes when a “housed” individual talks to you as if you are, or could be, her boss. Empowerment results from community “across lines” rather than simply within them. Moreover, feelings of entitlement and individualism require evaluation within the context from which they emerge and cannot be falsely deemed as the result of an anti-community ethic.

King’s Economics

As we turn from the theology of Martin Luther King, Jr. to a discussion of a pastoral theology of economics, it seems appropriate to briefly summarize King’s own contribution to the topic of theology and economics. King considered economic injustice to be the “inseparable twin” of racial injustice, and therefore fought for the economic justice of all peoples, regardless of race.³⁷ First, economic justice was an essential aspect of King’s conception of the beloved community. In his famous “I Have a Dream” speech, King called for the beloved community, a “place where all our gifts and resources are held not for ourselves alone but as instruments of service for the rest of humanity.”³⁸ It would be a land where the material and spiritual needs of all peoples would be provided for. King stated, “I have the audacity to believe that peoples everywhere can have three meals a day for their bodies, education and culture for their minds, and dignity, equality

³⁷ Martin Luther King, Jr., “Pilgrimage to Nonviolence,” in *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, ed. James Melvin Washington (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991), 37.

³⁸ Martin Luther King, Jr., “The Rising Tide of Racial Consciousness,” *YWCA Magazine*, December 1960, 3.

and freedom for their spirits.”³⁹ However, King aptly noted that poor people pay more for their material needs to be met and quite literally are imprisoned in a “domestic colony” based on the limitations of the urban transit system. Yet, there is no room in the beloved community for domestic colonization. The beloved community proffers economic and material security that imbues people with a sense of agency and empowers them through the knowledge that they have the power to make decisions for their own livelihoods.

Second, King read the gospel through a lens of economic justice. King provided exegesis of the parable of Dives and Lazarus, arguing that Dives went to hell for his failure to see Lazarus. In all his depravity and illness, Lazarus was invisible to Dives and thus it was not his wealth per se, but his indifference for which he was damned. King stated, “Indeed, Dives went to hell because he sought to be a conscientious objector in the war against poverty.”⁴⁰ King considered any religion that cared for one’s soul and not one’s material, social and economic condition to be “a spiritually moribund religion awaiting burial.”⁴¹ King criticized the Federal Housing Administration, called for an economic bill of rights, and birthed a campaign for jobs all on the basis of his theological belief that everybody is somebody.

A Pastoral Theology of Economics

A niche within the overall pastoral theological literature specifically focuses on the topic of economics. The scholarship of pastoral theologians Judith Orr, Susanne

³⁹ Martin Luther King, Jr., “Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech,” in *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, ed. James Melvin Washington (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991), 226.

⁴⁰ Martin Luther King, Jr., “Remaining Awake Through a Great Revolution,” in *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, ed. James Melvin Washington (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991), 274.

⁴¹ King, “Pilgrimage to Nonviolence,” 38.

Johnson, Pamela Couture and James Poling helps us better understand how economics impacts human development, the practice of service vs. justice, the lives of women and children, and the overall practices of pastoral care and counseling. This section then concludes with insights from M. Doug Meeks's text *God the Economist*, a theological rather than a pastoral theological construction.

We begin by examining how economics impacts human development. According to Judith Orr, stage theories of development have implicit socioeconomic assumptions that do not reflect the experiences of working class women.⁴² Orr aims to identify differences in development resulting from socioeconomic class by utilizing a dialectic developmental theory rather than the hegemonic theories of Freud, Erikson and Kohlberg. According to Orr, dialectical development theory differs from stage theory in that "the focus is on the dialectical interaction of individual and society; on the influence of biology, environment, and history; and on the self's creative ability to use available resources to negotiate adaptive responses -- either progressive or resistive -- to life's turning points and conflicts."⁴³ As development is influenced by race, culture, gender, socioeconomic status, and degree of agency and control, such influences cannot be ignored.

Orr conducted qualitative research with twenty adult women in Kansas City -- fifteen working class and five middle class women, ages twenty-three to eighty.⁴⁴ Utilizing her insights from these interviews, Orr posits how socioeconomic class influences the development of working class women in each stage of development. First,

⁴² Judith Orr, "Socioeconomic Class and the Life Span Development of Women," in *In Her Own Time: Women and Developmental Issues in Pastoral Care*, ed. Jeanne Stevenson Moessner (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000).

⁴³ Orr, "Socioeconomic," 46.

⁴⁴ Orr fails to identify the women's racial/ethnic backgrounds.

during childhood, women raised in working class families live with great uncertainty as, by and large, they lack more control over their lives and futures than do women raised in the middle class. These children are often given tremendous responsibility and autonomy at a young age, which results in a brief, truncated, or nonexistent childhood. Adolescence is usually shorter for working class youth as they are less likely to attend college, more likely to get married younger, and more likely to have their own children while still children themselves. Whereas Erikson labels adolescence as the period of “identity crisis,” according to Orr, working class adolescents experience a distinctive identity crisis in which they see few options or choices open to them. Orr utilizes Arthur Shostak’s three types of working-class adolescent girls -- achievers, accommodators, and rebels -- to examine how working-class adolescents cope with the uncertainty of their own futures and exercise whatever freedom they do have to assert their futures.⁴⁵

Unlike their middle class counterparts, Orr argues that working class women do not separate in the same way from their families of origin during young adulthood. Unlike middle class youth who differentiate from their parents in a time of exploring who they are, working class women are often catapulted into marriage, parenthood and adult responsibilities.⁴⁶ As such, they are often required to take low paying jobs that rarely recognize their strengths and gifts in order to provide economically for their families. For working-class women, young adulthood entails negotiating survival in light of economic oppression and preparing their own children for a life of struggle. In middle adulthood, whereas middle class women are likely to engage in a period of self-evaluation due to a sense of control over their lives, working class women are more likely to reflect on how

⁴⁵ Orr, “Socioeconomic,” 51-54.

⁴⁶ Orr, “Socioeconomic,” 54.

they help others. Orr writes, “The life theme identified by many working-class women in middle adulthood is that of helping others. They have moved beyond the theme of survival, even though some were single parents and struggled economically, to a point of feeling satisfaction in helping and guiding other people.”⁴⁷ Orr examines how this effect is produced by the complexities of marriage, divorce, employment, empty nest, and the different impacts on middle versus working class women.

Orr contends that in older adulthood the theme shifts from helping others toward furthering education. The emphasis on learning in this stage is due to the ethic of the bourgeois culture and the importance of education, as well as the fact that education cannot be taken away from you. Thus, learning becomes a means of achieving dignity and the adoption of “shared communal wisdom.”⁴⁸ In addition, working class women in older adulthood are less concerned with their failures and define their success relationally. They yearn for rest as they seek wholeness for themselves within their contexts of oppression.

Orr concludes that individualism is not the goal of healthy development. Rather, through her qualitative interviews, Orr demonstrates that the aim of healthy development is to work against oppressive structures toward the achievement of “mutually respectful life in community.”⁴⁹ Working class women develop differently toward this end than their middle class counterparts, and their experiences empower them as they strive to liberate themselves from systemic domination and oppression.

⁴⁷ Orr, “Socioeconomic,” 59.

⁴⁸ Orr, “Socioeconomic,” 60.

⁴⁹ Orr, “Socioeconomic,” 63.

Orr then utilizes this understanding of working-class women's development in her article "Ministry with Working-Class Women."⁵⁰ Orr presents the story of Loretta Shosty, who experienced the counsel of her pastor as meddlesome and destructive. When Pastor Gilmore encouraged her daughter to apply for a scholarship to the state university, his guidance stemmed from his unexamined white, middle-class values -- values not shared by Loretta and her family. Orr thus illustrates how Loretta, and women like her, are "silenced by sex and by class in both church and society."⁵¹ According to Orr, class is not determined by income or assets, but by ownership to the means of economic production. For women, class is also influenced by their relational status, and women who are single heads-of-household often fare worse than their partnered sisters. But working-class women are present in all races, ethnicities, ages, and geographies.

Orr highlights the lack of agency on the part of working-class women, which often requires the adoption of coping skills necessary for survival. "They learn to trust actions over words and to mistrust promises, pretence, smooth talkers, intellectualizers, and people who 'butter-up' superiors. After all, 'talk is cheap -- it doesn't pay the rent.'"⁵² The working-class woman often values family as a means of self-identification and perhaps the one place where she does not have to fight for survival against systems that take everything and give very little.

Orr goes on to posit how pastoral care and counseling with working-class women differs from traditional theory and practice. In contrast to work with the middle-class, the primary aim is not self-enhancement and the development of skills necessary to cope with occasional crisis. Rather, the goal is to address issues of inequality, impart skills for

⁵⁰ Judith L. Orr, "Ministry with Working-Class Women," *Journal of Pastoral Care* 45 (1991): 343-53.

⁵¹ Orr, "Ministry," 343.

⁵² Orr, "Ministry," 348.

conflict resolution, and foster healthy self-concept and self-respect through effectuating change in the systems within which one participates.⁵³ Toward this end, Orr offers suggestions for modified worship and counsel. Through worship, working-class women benefit by participating in a community that fights against injustices and gives dignity to the marginalized. They benefit from the reminder that God suffers with them, but “holds the promise and power to transform the world into a kin-dom where lion and lamb lie down together (Isa. 65:25).”⁵⁴ In counseling, a group or family approach is preferred over individual counseling. Groups may be focused on problem-solving, in which case women offer support to one another as they work toward individual, communal and systemic change. Or groups may be discussion based, such as an educative group in which participants explore dynamics of power and their positions in family, work, and community. Orr notes that while middle-class women often want empathy and support, working-class women tend to seek honesty. Most are wary of counselors whose methods emphasize the counselor’s authority, unconditional affirmation or a nondirective approach.

We now turn to examine how economics relate to practices of service versus practices of justice as evidenced in the work of Susanne Johnson. Johnson examines understandings of Christian practice in order to critique the church’s response to institutionalized inequity.⁵⁵ Drawing on the scholarship of Alasdair MacIntyre, Johnson defines practice as activity that addresses human need and is shaped in distinctive ways by history, scripture, theology, and liturgy. By summarizing the context of poverty in

⁵³ Orr, “Ministry,” 349.

⁵⁴ Orr, “Ministry,” 350.

⁵⁵ Susanne Johnson, “Remembering the Poor: Transforming Christian Practice,” in *Redemptive Transformation in Practical Theology: Essays in Honor of James E. Loder, Jr.*, ed. Dana Wright and John D. Kuentzel (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 189-215.

America today, Johnson argues that present Christian practices render service but not justice. She speaks to the experiences of children dying throughout the world, the “slaughter of innocents” through the war on terror, and the cultural and socioeconomic ethics driving those living in the U.S. toward self-destruction. Johnson argues that economically secure Christians cannot clearly see their complicit role in the neo-liberal economic system until they hear the stories of the have-nots. Johnson then examines how the Christian practice of service is influenced by unjust economic ideology and practices. Given the church’s role as the “hidden safety net,” Johnson states, “I wish to make the case, however, that the so-called *servanthood* model – translated into *service delivery* regarding ministry with the poor – is grounded neither in solid biblical–theological foundations nor in a perceptive analysis (and spiritual discernment) of how best to be *stewards* (housekeepers and managers) of our manifold God-given resources.”⁵⁶

Toward that end, Johnson offers a critique of Craig Dykstra’s hermeneutic of service found in his book *Vision and Character: A Christian Educator’s Alternative to Kohlberg*.⁵⁷ In an effort to construct a visional moral ethic as a corrective to Kohlberg’s juridical ethic, Dykstra advocates that “at the heart of service lies, not effectiveness, but *presence*.”⁵⁸ According to Dykstra, when the aim of service is effectiveness, servants are required to wield power over those being served, and thus become masters who determine even what constitutes efficacy. He writes, “The discipline of service is a discipline through which care, concern, and aid are given by one person to another in a

⁵⁶ Susanne Johnson, 199.

⁵⁷ Craig Dykstra, *Vision and Character: A Christian Educator’s Alternative to Kohlberg* (New York: Paulist, 1981).

⁵⁸ Craig Dykstra, 101.

particular way that is shaped by presence.”⁵⁹ Johnson argues that Dykstra’s model of Christian service is closely aligned with white, middle-class values that fail to acknowledge unjust power structures. Dykstra’s model privileges interpersonal service while ignoring how such service propagates an unjust socioeconomic system. Johnson writes, “I challenge Dykstra’s assumption that the only way to avoid abusing power is to renounce power. And I especially challenge his assumption that Jesus himself calls followers to renounce power. And finally, I challenge his lack of self-awareness regarding the impact of social location on perceptions of power.”⁶⁰

Johnson continues by examining Mark 10:35-44 and Luke 22:24-27, the same passages Dykstra employs in his call for servanthood. In contrast, she formulates an exegesis that illustrates how Christians are called to exercise their God-given power toward justice, rather than denouncing their power toward servitude. Johnson shows how Jesus empowered the working poor to recognize and work against systemic injustice and how respecting the poor is respecting God. Therefore, power must be relational, communal, and collaborative in order to be equally distributed among all God’s children, including the poor.

Based upon Johnson’s reformulation of power and her revision of *diakonia* and service, she then calls for revised practices aimed at remembering the poor. Johnson advocates for faith-based community revitalization in which the construction of intentional communities gives primacy to the “presence of the poor in history, and to God’s own special presence in and concern for the poor.”⁶¹ Johnson argues that such intentional communities allow the stories of the poor to become “the basis for *collective*

⁵⁹ Craig Dykstra, 104.

⁶⁰ Susanne Johnson, 204.

⁶¹ Susanne Johnson, 214.

critique of ideology.”⁶² Thus, faith-based communities are grounded in the experiences of the poor and strive toward justice rather than service.

Pamela D. Couture and Richard Hester examine how economics influences the disciplines of pastoral care and counseling, as well as the theological beliefs intrinsic to economic practice.⁶³ They articulate a brief history of pastoral care and counseling since the early twentieth century. Based on the influences of the rise of psychology, the two world wars, the advent of clinical pastoral education and the secularization of pastoral counseling, Couture and Hester claim that the field of pastoral care and counseling adopted an economic ethic synonymous with the medical model. Pastoral care and counseling moved away from the “sacred canopy of the church” toward the “sacred canopy of medicine.”⁶⁴ In doing so, pastoral counseling became more closely aligned with a medical model of therapy as compared to the religious traditions that originally legitimated such practices of care. Today, pastoral counselors adopt the principles of the market economy and the economic creed and thoughtlessly participate in the economic market of self-interest, which is in direct opposition to “the benefit of any theologically driven intervention on behalf of the poor.”⁶⁵ Pastoral counselors who operate within this medical model require clinical fees, successful marketing and business practice.

Based upon the negative economic implications of such a medical model, Couture and Hester call for economic practices grounded in a theology of God as economist.

Drawing on the theology of M. Douglas Meeks, Couture and Hester advocate eliminating

⁶² Susanne Johnson, 214.

⁶³ Pamela D. Couture and Richard Hester, “The Future of Pastoral Care and Counseling and the God of the Market,” in *Pastoral Care and Social Conflict: Essays in Honor of Charles V. Gerkin*, ed. Pamela D. Couture and Rodney J. Hunter (Nashville: Abingdon, 1995).

⁶⁴ Couture and Hester, 46.

⁶⁵ Couture and Hester, 49.

understandings of God as all-powerful or maker of the market laws and creed. Proponents of economically-just pastoral care and counseling need to work toward providing ministry at the margins of institutions, establishing closer relationships with congregations, becoming involved in political and systemic issues within larger society, and creating relationships with public health facilities, specifically those caring for the underserved.⁶⁶ Such changes would serve to move pastoral care and counseling back to the sacred canopy of the congregation and toward greater economic justice in the world.

Drawing on two works by Pamela D. Couture, we now turn to examine how economics impact the lives of women and children. In *Blessed Are the Poor?: Women's Poverty, Family Policy, and Practical Theology*, Pamela D. Couture examines the deleterious effects of an ethic of self-sufficiency on the health and welfare of women and children.⁶⁷ This book was published in 1991, prior to the 1996 welfare reform in the United States. Couture constructs a practical theology of shared responsibility by describing the current landscape of women in the U.S., examining the influences of equality and self-sufficiency, and reflecting on these concepts through the theology of Luther and Wesley.

Couture begins by describing the situation of women's economics in the U.S., arguing that the poverty of the female-headed household is caused by women's secondary status in a socioeconomic system founded on sexual and racial divisions of labor. Divorced women and single mothers are often more responsible for both the care and the economic provision of their children and therefore experience conflict between their

⁶⁶ Couture and Hester, 54.

⁶⁷ Pamela D. Couture, *Blessed Are the Poor?: Women's Poverty, Family Policy, and Practical Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1991).

family responsibilities and their “availability for economic competition.”⁶⁸ In addition, inner-city communities themselves, home to many female-headed households, are also victimized by the oppression of “macroeconomic processes of advanced capitalism.”⁶⁹

Couture then expounds upon the rhetoric of equality and the logic of self-sufficiency, illustrating how the battle for equal rights often failed to “address the historic racism, sexism or classism which binds our socioeconomic system.”⁷⁰ Affirmative action causes many in the U.S. to believe that women have equal access to employment, but fails to take into account how both the system and women’s familial responsibilities often deny them the opportunity to pursue such positions. The policy that resulted from the fight for equality pushed an ethic of self-sufficiency, which contends that the individual is solely responsible for her life problems, while it largely ignores the role of community, the government and other systems. As such, policy has largely failed to protect women and children. Couture then traces the logic of self-sufficiency beginning with the philosophy of Plato and Aristotle, through early Christianity to medieval times in order to illustrate the various conceptions of self-sufficiency and the manner in which women’s lives are affected.

Couture continues by illustrating Luther’s alternative to self-sufficiency, arguing that Luther recovered the importance of motherhood by privileging mutuality over self-sufficiency.⁷¹ Luther condemned fathers who abandoned their families to seek religious merit and criticized the Pope and priests who encouraged such practices. Couture demonstrates how Luther replaced self-sufficiency with an ethic of care and an emphasis

⁶⁸ Couture, *Blessed*, 38.

⁶⁹ Couture, *Blessed*, 38.

⁷⁰ Couture, *Blessed*, 59.

⁷¹ Couture, *Blessed*, citing Martin Luther, *Luther’s Works*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut T. Lehmann, American ed., 55 vols. (St. Louis: Concordia, Philadelphia: Fortress, 1955-76).

on the relationality of God's children. Luther spoke against economic practices that served the Pope but denied the needs of women and children; Luther rejected celibacy as requisite for salvation and valued the role of the family in society; Luther recognized that one's economic situation is determined as much by environment as individual action; and he advocated that Christians are relational in their care for others not due to individual salvation but because God calls us to serve our neighbors.

Couture then examines Wesley's positions on sexuality and economics.⁷² Couture explores Wesley's own personal history, paying attention to how his experience influenced and changed his theology. Wesley's relational ethic does not elevate the status of women and children in the way of Luther. However, Wesley's reflections on economics are helpful as Wesley "was convinced that the inequitable distribution of wealth, rather than scarcity, created poverty."⁷³ Couture extrapolates Wesley's stance on economics from both his writings and his personal actions. Unlike Luther's vision, which more directly addressed the domestic lives of individuals, Wesley called for revision of systemic policies and advocacy with nations.

By embracing the call for shared responsibility as advocated in the theologies of Luther and Wesley, Couture examines how this ethic of care influenced women's experiences in the U.S. beginning in the late eighteenth century. According to Couture, "Even though American tradition is filled with stories of the so-called 'self-made man,' early American thinkers assumed that the possibility of self-sufficiency depended upon

⁷² Couture, *Blessed*, citing John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, Vols. 1-4, *Sermons I-IV*, ed. Albert C. Outler (Nashville: Abingdon, 1984-1987); *The Works of John Wesley*, Vol. 25, *Letters I, 1721-1739*, ed. Frank Baker (Oxford: Clarendon, 1980); *The Works of John Wesley*, Vol. 26, *Letters II, 1740-1755*, ed. Frank Baker (Oxford: Clarendon, 1982); *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley*, ed. Thomas Jackson, 14 vols. (London: Wesleyan Methodist Book Room, 1872).

⁷³ Couture, *Blessed*, 127.

the broader support of government and community.”⁷⁴ Couture evidenced this contention through the life and works of Thomas Jefferson. Couture then traces the ideology of motherhood in the U.S. through periods of politicization, conflict, idealization, professionalization, preservation and protection. Throughout all of these time periods and their various approaches and conceptions of domesticity and motherhood, Couture contends that it was impossible for women to separate the connection between the individual and the social, the public and the private, and thus demonstrated care for all peoples.⁷⁵

Based upon these various resources, Couture returns to examine the failure of self-sufficiency, claiming that self-sufficiency “holds individuals so fully responsible for their own lives that they cannot be moral agents without giving up relational and economic power.”⁷⁶ Couture advocates for public policy that acts against an ethic of self-sufficiency toward greater shared responsibility. Shared responsibility requires the following actions: examining how all macroeconomic policies affect “the least” among us; valuing women’s domestic responsibilities as part of household economics and instating a family wage; recognizing that all women “deserve” care and equal support of single-parent and two-parent families; equalizing access to health care; and demanding that those in power share their power. Couture provides the theological impetus for these actions and the theological imperative of shared responsibility.

In her book *Seeing Children, Seeing God: A Practical Theology of Children and Poverty*, published nine years following *Blessed Are the Poor?*, Couture constructs a

⁷⁴ Couture, *Blessed*, 137.

⁷⁵ Couture, *Blessed*, 155.

⁷⁶ Couture, *Blessed*, 164.

practical theology of children's poverty in the U.S.⁷⁷ Couture defines children's poverty as both material poverty and a "poverty of tenuous connections."⁷⁸ Couture constructs a map of children's poverties, illustrating how in 1996, 19.8 percent of children in the U.S. lived in poor households in which they suffered not only from unmet material needs but also lacked adequate connection to the resources and support systems necessary to transcend their impoverished circumstance.⁷⁹ Parental income and material means are only half the problem of poverty when children in the U.S. are denied access to resources. Therefore, tenuous connections occur between parents and children, within children's neighborhoods, between children and neighborhood organizations, and between children and the government and public policymakers.

In light of material poverty and poverty of tenuous connections, Couture utilizes Urie Bronfenbrenner's theory regarding social ecology and child development in order to articulate how the church can influence healthy child development. Bronfenbrenner contends that childhood development is impacted by microsystems (contact with family, friends, caretakers), mesosystems (interaction between all systems in which the child is a part), exosystems (influences from larger institutions), and finally macrosystems (which transmit cultural values and beliefs).⁸⁰ The church and theology influence all four of levels of the social ecology and can take proactive measures that could alleviate children's poverties at all levels.

Couture then turns to examine why religiously based care is in a unique position to effect change regarding children's poverties by exploring "the means of grace" as

⁷⁷ Pamela D. Couture, *Seeing Children, Seeing God: A Practical Theology of Children and Poverty* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2000).

⁷⁸ Couture, *Seeing Children*, 14.

⁷⁹ Couture, *Seeing Children*, 25.

⁸⁰ Couture, *Seeing Children*, 42.

articulated in Wesleyan theology. Couture illustrates how Christians are called to care for “the church’s godchildren,” a term she prefers over “poor children,” as children are created in the image of God. By the means of grace all Christians are called to meet the spiritual and physical needs of children, and possibly help “the one who is afflicted to overcome self-defeating habits.”⁸¹ Such acts of care by the means of grace are works of mercy. Such works of mercy have priority over works of faith, as it is truly through works of mercy that we meet God in the other, in the lives of the church’s godchildren.

Couture employs both the Old and New Testaments to explore the ethics of mercy, piety and care in the Christian Bible. Couture examines the concept of the orphan in the poetic and prophetic literature of the Old Testament. Couture states that within the poetic literature the authors “do not waver in the expectation that God will be just, strengthening and protecting the orphan and punishing those who exploit the vulnerable.”⁸² In the prophetic literature, the image of the orphan calls people to lives of mercy, lives of faith in God, and a vision for justice. Couture then demonstrates how Jesus in his ministry demonstrates right relation between mercy, faith, and justice for the afflicted.⁸³ In Matthew we learn that “the call to care is simple, but the consequences of care are complex” as we are required to become vulnerable through acts and lives of mercy.⁸⁴ Based upon the theology of Wesley as well as the influences from the Scriptures, Couture contends that grace is what calls us to care and to act on behalf of children’s poverties.

⁸¹ Couture, *Seeing Children*, 57.

⁸² Couture, *Seeing Children*, 76.

⁸³ Couture, *Seeing Children*, 79.

⁸⁴ Couture, *Seeing Children*, 83.

Couture concludes this text by constructing a practical theology of children and poverty. Drawing on the concept she developed in *Blessed Are the Poor?*, Couture argues that caring for children's poverties requires shared responsibility. She writes, "As we take shared responsibility for the journey we will use the practices in which pastoral care has built confidence, such as careful listening, attending to all present with special care for the less powerful, and building empathy. But we will practice care in new places where hope can be invited."⁸⁵ Couture employs Bronfenbrenner's theory of social ecology to articulate seven levels of a child's social ecology upon which her practical theology is based: the individual child, the family, community institutions, government policy, cultural beliefs, values, and expressions, economic structures, and nature.⁸⁶ Couture calls for specific actions within each of these levels in order to enact shared responsibility. Some of Couture's recommendations include listening to the stories of children; reforming practices of care for children; sharing responsibility with families in providing care for children; utilizing the congregation as a bridge to connect the church's godchildren with available resources; advocating for liberative public policy within state and federal governments; examining the impact of such oppressive forces as sexism, racism, and economic injustice; naming and revitalizing institutions of systemic oppression throughout the world, including the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund; and caring for the earth and God's creation in a way that values our children's futures. Couture's recommendations for revised action and praxis aim to affect change at all levels of a child's social ecology in order to end both material poverty and the poverty of tenuous connections.

⁸⁵ Couture, *Seeing Children*, 92.

⁸⁶ Couture, *Seeing Children*, 93.

Drawing upon the work of Couture, James Newton Poling examines the intersection of economic vulnerability, family violence, religion, and pastoral practice.⁸⁷ Poling employs an intercultural method and draws upon various cultural contexts in order to illustrate how pastoral care can be transformed to incorporate awareness and sensitivity to economic vulnerability and oppression. Poling invites contributing authors Brenda Consuelo Ruiz and Linda Crockett to paint a picture of economic vulnerability and violence from their own social locations, to which Poling adds vignettes from his personal pastoral counseling practice. Based upon these three contexts, Poling illustrates how current theory and practice in pastoral care and counseling fail to integrate sophisticated understandings of economic vulnerability and family violence.⁸⁸ Poling then demonstrates how three cultures, one in Nicaragua and two in the U.S., fought against the hegemony of capitalism. First, Poling depicts the role of the U.S. military in creating economic vulnerability for the peoples of Nicaragua and shows how the people organized to develop alternate economies, such as farming with small animals and the provision of pastoral counseling for women and children.⁸⁹ Second, African Americans in the U.S. also acted in resistance to capitalism beginning with the revolt against slavery. Poling evidences a history of African American resistance to the capitalism of slavery by highlighting the economic theory of Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Poor People's Campaign, the intentional African American communities of self-subsistence, and the role of the National of Islam and Malcolm X. Poling writes, "In every case, leaders

⁸⁷ James Newton Poling, *Render Unto God: Economic Vulnerability, Family Violence and Pastoral Theology* (St. Louis: Chalice, 2002); James Poling, "Pastoral Care in a Time of Global Market Capitalism," *Journal of Pastoral Care and Counseling* 58 (2004): 179-85. "Pastoral Care in a Time of Global Market Capitalism" was written following *Render Unto God*. It echoes many of the book's themes and thus will be woven within the following presentation of the book.

⁸⁸ Poling, *Render Unto God*, 57.

⁸⁹ Poling, *Render Unto God*, 22.

advocate an economic system in which human values of cooperation, inclusiveness, and community assume priority over the capitalistic values of individualism, competition, and supply and demand.”⁹⁰ Third, Poling also examines women’s resistance to capitalism in the U.S. both at work and at home. African American female slaves resisted hegemonic capitalist ideals by participating in the underground railroad, educating themselves and becoming literate, pursuing legal recourse toward affirmative action, and, as in the case of Harriet Tubman, even bearing arms. Women resisted capitalism by organizing and leading labor unions; immigrant women refused to assimilate to the dominant culture. By demonstrating the connection between patriarchy and capitalism, Poling illustrates how capitalism perpetuates women’s subordination and exploitation under patriarchy. Poling evidences women’s resistance to domestic violence, sexual violence, and the international sex industry, which are all part and parcel of the nexus between capitalism and patriarchy. Poling calls for an alternative, vision-based, feminist economic system.

By incorporating biblical and theological resources, Poling posits the question “What must we render to God, and what can we render to the political economy in which we live?”⁹¹ Poling provides background on the historical economic context during the days of Jesus, arguing that the colonial powers of the Roman-Jewish government advocated a system of redistribution within which only the elite were served. Based on this context, Mark portrayed Jesus as a leader in empowering the poor. Jesus resisted the socioeconomic order and encouraged such dissenting behavior in all his followers. This ethic is central to his ministry, as evidenced by the healing of the poor and the miraculous feedings. Poling then explores Jesus’ ministry of liberation. Jesus came from Galilee, a

⁹⁰ Poling, *Render Unto God*, 141.

⁹¹ Poling, *Render Unto God*, 165.

land that suffered from political and economic oppression, and in his ministry fought to expose the injustices perpetuated by the ideologies of the system. Thus, the life and death of Jesus compel Christians to follow in his liberatory practice toward eradicating economic vulnerability.

Based upon this understanding of Jesus and his ministry, Poling then turns to advocate for a doctrine of the church that is empowered by the Holy Spirit. Such a church embodies five normative marks. First, a church that aims to end economic vulnerability and violence needs to practice inclusive love, in contrast to the tendency to exclude those who cause discomfort.⁹² The church is called to include the marginalized, the other, and those from all walks of life with love, not judgment, acceptance, not moralism. Second, the church enacts loving justice in which the poor are protected, abuse is confronted, and resources are fairly distributed. A just community is accountable to both the victims and the perpetrators of violence and provides resources toward the healing of all. Third, the church engages in nonviolent resistance in order to challenge the evil of injustice and inequality. Fourth, the church simultaneously enacts multiplicity and unity. Through multiplicity the church values difference and through unity the church values harmony and love with all creation. Finally, the church is marked by ambiguity and goodness. Poling writes, “Ambiguity in tension with goodness is a mark of the church. This tension can never be fully resolved. Accepting ambiguity without moral struggle is sloth; asserting moral perfection without knowledge of ambiguity is pride.”⁹³ These five normative marks of the church enact the sign of the Spirit toward the eradication of economic vulnerability and violence but require revised practice.

⁹² Poling, *Render Unto God*, 204.

⁹³ Poling, *Render Unto God*, 210.

Finally, Poling outlines a call for transforming pastoral care. Poling begins by developing a system for the analysis of injustice and oppression. This requires three levels of cultural and economic analysis: understanding difference, how systems of oppression are organized around race, sexuality, gender and culture, and how values of the powerful become hegemonic and enforced by violence. Poling calls ministers and caregivers to engage in microanalysis of their ministries in order to identify economic differences and oppressions, as well as issues of economic privilege and power. Poling develops a tool for diagnosing economic vulnerability, which, as will later be examined, may be modified to benefit the practice of pastoral counseling with the homeless. Pastoral counselors need training to detect how economic vulnerability influences counseling and how they can resist oppressive, individualistic assumptions of therapy. Without such exploration, pastoral counselors “tend to be individualistic rather than relational, and they assume a benevolent environment where people can make choices about how to express their sense of initiative and autonomy.”⁹⁴ Such assumptions take for granted the degree of control individuals exercise over their daily lives and thus often lead to patronizing forms of care and counsel. Poling writes, “In a world where poverty oppresses the majority of the world’s people, the theories and techniques of pastoral care underestimate the obstacles in persons’ lives and impose middle-class values in inappropriate ways.”⁹⁵ While I would argue that in this assumption Poling overlooks the more liberative pastoral care techniques posited by Lartey, Orr, and others, out of this assessment Poling aims to construct a theory of pastoral care for victims and survivors of family violence that includes principles of safety for the victim, accountability for the abusers, intentionality

⁹⁴ Poling, *Render Unto God*, 222.

⁹⁵ Poling, “Pastoral Care in a Time,” 179.

regarding healing and mourning losses, and that aids in reconnection with others.⁹⁶

Poling then advocates for changing the economic structures of pastoral counseling in which the expenses fall to the whole community rather than the individual, the economic structure in place at The Clinebell Institute.⁹⁷ This revision makes care accessible to all God's children regardless of economic status, but with special attention to the economically vulnerable.

In the final chapter, Poling outlines a nine-stage theory of transformation to develop a spirituality of practicing goodness toward economic justice and nonviolence. Such acts of transformation are specifically geared toward the middle class, as that is the social location of most readers of his text. These nine stages include: open receptivity; listening and believing; seeking knowledge; courage to act; accompaniment; transformation of self and congregation; making long-term commitments; prophetic action; and transformation of worship and community life.⁹⁸ These nine stages transform the caregiver and cultivate a spirituality that transcends barriers of race, gender and class. Poling writes, "We come to see that the hierarchies that divide people in the world, namely rich and poor, male and female, black and white, can be overcome when persons are together in God's community. Joining this community requires openness, courage, discipline, and long-term commitment, but it often begins in a simple request for care."⁹⁹

Although writing from a theological rather than a pastoral theological perspective, M. Douglas Meeks offers a pastorally valuable understanding of God and the

⁹⁶ Poling, *Render Unto God*, 229.

⁹⁷ Poling, *Render Unto God*, 232.

⁹⁸ Poling, *Render Unto God*, 236.

⁹⁹ Poling, *Render Unto God*, 251.

economy.¹⁰⁰ Meeks utilizes a metaphorical understanding of the Triune God as economist in order to demonstrate how through relationship the Father, Son and Holy Spirit challenge the foundational premises of the market economy. Understandings of God as omnipotent, immutable, and unmoved by humanity's suffering allow the dominant classes to justify their power and thus exclude all others from achieving their livelihood. Such an understanding of God makes space for limiting property rights to the powerful, encouraging persons to define their worth with work, regarding the needs of the few as superior to the needs of the many, and permitting the wealthy to own the means to livelihood.

First, Meeks utilizes the concept of *oikos*, which he defines as “access to livelihood,” in order to support a metaphorical understanding of God as economist. *Oikos* is the household of all God's creation in which people relate with one another not for the sake of exchange of commodities, but in a manner similar to the mutual interdependence of God in the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. God's economic work thus begins with those who are excluded from the *oikos*, the least among us, as God the economist is a liberator. As illustrated in Exodus 3:7-8b, God knows the suffering of God's children in Egypt and seeks to deliver them. God dwells among the slaves and invites them into the *oikos* so that they may have access to livelihood. Thus, Meeks writes, “The ‘household of God’ exists as an agent of God's work to make the world into a household in which all of God's creatures will find access to life.”¹⁰¹

Meeks also understands God the economist as the Torah keeper. Drawing on the Covenant Code, the Deuteronomic Code, and the Holiness Code, Meeks illustrates how

¹⁰⁰ M. Douglas Meeks, *God the Economist: The Doctrine of God and Political Economy* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989).

¹⁰¹ Meeks, 45.

God liberated the oppressed when they were strangers and expects others to do the same for their brothers and sisters. God condemned slavery, whether a claim is made on one's life or on one's economic livelihood. God commanded a Jubilee year in order to redistribute power through the freeing of slaves, the cancellation of debt, and the return of property. God called for a tithing, so that the have-nots may share in the abundance of all God's blessing. Thus, being made in the image of God requires that human beings are made God's economists, working toward God's will for creation which entails the right to livelihood for all.

Based upon this understanding of God the economist, Meeks presents three aspects of God that inform pastoral practice. They are God and property, God and work, and God and needs. Meeks demonstrates that although all humans have a need for property, "all property is obligated."¹⁰² Thus we are obligated to utilize property for the livelihood of all rather than the powerful few. We are at risk of turning property or any possession into a false idol, and, to guard against this, need to understand it not as commodity but as a gift. Gifts are not about equal exchange, nor do they involve only two people. Rather, gifting, as Meeks explains it, is a way of paying it forward. Meeks illustrates this with the parable of the widow who gives not from her abundance but from her lack. In this way, we do not get trapped in the market mentality that understands property as commodity for consumption. Property is a gift.

Second, Meeks' conception of God and work holds important implications for pastoral practice. According to Meeks, work is inherently theological as it is "the most immediate way in which human beings dominate and exploit each other."¹⁰³ Foremost,

¹⁰² Meeks, 116.

¹⁰³ Meeks, 127.

all humans have the right to work, as work is not a commodification of one's abilities but is a way of participating in community. However, the success ethic inherent in the Protestant work ethic posits that "work justifies one's existence" and that "life is dependent on work and organized around it."¹⁰⁴ In contrast, Meeks constructs a Trinitarian view of work which understands that each person of the Trinity "engages in distinctive personal work," collaborative work, equal work.¹⁰⁵ However, God the economist not only works, but rests. God is not a task-master and work should not be equated with salvation.

Finally, Meeks depicts an understanding of the relationship between God and needs. How we understand needs is critical for the functioning of the *oikos*. Meeks demonstrates that within a market society needs are portrayed as insatiable and indicative of economic growth. Yet, we live in a world in which our needs can be met. There is no scarcity, however, there is lack and insufficiency. God destroys scarcity through God's righteousness. There is enough, as illustrated in the parable of the loaves and the fishes. It is when we hoard possession for our own needs that we deny God's righteousness and our ability to make livelihood possible for all those in the *oikos*.

Pastoral Theology of Economics and Homelessness

Pastoral theology of economics provides a unique lens of reflection from which to view the experience of homelessness. This body of literature provides concrete recommendations for the practice of pastoral care and counseling with those who experience homelessness. Yet, the homeless experience also offers a unique lens through which to view the literature.

¹⁰⁴ Meeks, 143.

¹⁰⁵ Meeks, 132.

The literature offers significant analysis into the role of community in the lives of homeless individuals and families. King called for the beloved community as a means of achieving economic equality. King posited that economic equality and the coming together as community would result in positive psychological changes for those formerly oppressed. Therefore, community and equality contribute to positive mental status and self-concept. However, we understand from Couture's writing that individuals, especially children, are operating in worlds of tenuous connection. Rather than the mutuality inherent in King's beloved community, the reality is that the poor often have the most fragile connections to family, resources, community, government, and power. Therefore, in order to cultivate mutual or beloved communities, homeless individuals and families require care within their social ecologies from all levels. Yet, homeless individuals and families often experience displacement: they are removed, often against their choice, from their known social ecologies. For the research partner who grew up on the South side of Los Angeles, the shelter, located nearly 35 miles to the East of the city, might as well be in another country. Her social ecology has been replaced, and until she begins to receive care from various levels, she can only understand herself as an individual rather than as part of a community.

The literature also reflects the role of community as evidenced in Orr's writing on development. According to Orr, impoverished women undergo development with added uncertainty and responsibility, with pressure to provide for others, and with altered goals for development. For impoverished women, individuation is not the goal of development; rather, the goal of development is "mutually respectful life in community." Orr's analysis helps us to understand the sense of failure on the part of homeless mothers when they are

unable to provide for their children as well as the devastation that often accompanies being a single woman, most often in their 40s-60s, living in the shelter.

Finally, in light of Meeks's understanding of *oikos*, the homeless require invitation into participation. They are at the margins, excluded from the household of God which is founded upon mutuality and interdependence. It is God the economist's desire that the least among us be brought within the *oikos*, but in light of worldly injustice and oppression, inclusion is at the invitation of those with unjust power. This is the role of caregivers and volunteers – to invite and remind homeless individuals and families that they are members of God's interdependent household and that they are God's precious children. Lisette said it would have been a "big help" had the volunteers invited residents to their faith homes to participate in "a turkey spaghetti dinner for the community. Or boys club and girls club. Or glee club, whatever. Invite us to come to one of their rehearsals or singing ... that would have been also helpful." But the invitation into the *oikos* must be made.

The literature also offers a lens for reflecting on whether volunteering is simply service or service toward justice. Johnson's analysis of Dykstra's service paradigm illustrates how service in itself does not enact justice. Johnson utilizes scripture to demonstrate that servitude is not the denouncing of power; rather service toward justice is the use of such power against systemic injustice and toward respect for the poor. Using Jesus as the exemplar, Johnson depicts how service toward justice depends on relational, communal and collaborative power, rather than powerless service. Therefore, when faith communities decide to embark upon ministry with the homeless, they are perpetuating injustice if they do anything except share power. Groups of volunteers who bring lavish

meals on Sunday evenings, but refuse to sit and dine with residents, are serving but are not working toward justice. Poling also demonstrates how Jesus' ministry was one of economic justice-seeking. Jesus encouraged dissention against the prevailing socioeconomic order toward the eradication of economic vulnerability. Jesus' ministry is an important guide for those seeking to volunteer with the homeless as Jesus did not commit one-time acts of service. There was not simply one miraculous feeding that happened on one Sunday evening at a time convenient for that faith community. For this reason, Poling's nine-stage theory of spiritual growth is a valuable resource for educating volunteers with and advocates for the homeless. More will be said about utilizing this tool in Chapter 5.

Next, the pastoral theological literature addressing economics offers direct implications for the practice of pastoral care and counseling within the homeless context. First, according to Orr, impoverished women seek honesty in counseling over and above empathy. They seek directive, caring confrontation rather than pity. Therefore, pastoral counseling needs to strike a balance between honesty and empathy. Second, based on Couture's writings, pastoral counseling should also strike a balance between empowerment and the cultivation of a false sense of self-sufficiency. Individuals are not solely responsible for their lives and their circumstances and therefore they cannot be self-sufficient in their attempts to overcome hardship and oppression. According to Couture, ethics of self-sufficiency are duplicitous and unhelpful. Yet, homeless individuals do need to feel empowered. They need help to cultivate mastery and a sense of agency over the things that they can control. Therefore, pastoral counselors walk a thin

line between not perpetuating a false ethic of self-sufficiency while at the same time empowering the homeless to take control over that which they are able.

Finally, Poling constructs an interview form to assess economic vulnerability. He does this as a means of helping pastoral counselors and caregivers to determine how economic location impacts both past, present and future experience. However, Poling's interview itself is infused with middle class values that are not appropriate for the homeless context. For example, he does not include child support as a possible expense or government assistance, such as general relief, cash aid, or SSI for disabilities, as possible forms of income. Moreover, there is an implicit assumption that the person completing the interview is employed. While it is essential to assess the impact of socioeconomic status in the overall pastoral counseling assessment, it is extremely difficult to avoid one's own bias and cultural location in the formulation of such an assessment. A modification of this form that is relevant to the homeless context would aid pastoral counselors to assess the impact of economics upon the client's various cultural locations, treatment goals, and the entire counseling process.

Intercultural Pastoral Care and Counseling

As evident in the literature review, the homeless are an increasingly diverse population. In response to such diversity, how can pastoral caregivers provide culturally-relevant care? The aim of this section is to review a representative sample of the literature addressing intercultural care and counseling in order to define culture and intercultural care, examine the particular foci evident in the literature on intercultural care, and elucidate the competencies or requisite skills for effective intercultural practice.

Defining Culture

While there is great variation among scholars regarding the definition of culture, this examination omits such narrow definitions that understand culture as simply ethnicity or race. Perhaps most simply, Homer L. Jernigan defines culture as “a collective lifestyle that has been developed by people who share a common geography and a common history.”¹⁰⁶ However, this definition does not capture the dynamic and unbound aspects of culture. For instance, according to Aart M. van Beek, fluidity and change is inherent in all cultures.¹⁰⁷ Culture is dynamic rather than static. Therefore, van Beek utilizes meaning-making as a foundation of his own definition of culture but expands upon it when he writes

As persons are freed up more to be from many worlds and to move toward new worlds, a flexible concept of culture must be employed, allowing reflections about the cultures of caregivers and care seekers to be determined by their experience, not by rigid categories. Thus a concept of culture as *meaning providing processes determined and perpetuated by a group* is appropriate. This concept covers categories utilized by anthropologists such as beliefs, values, ritual, customs, and other types of behavior.¹⁰⁸

According to van Beek even one’s primary cultural background, for example Korean or African ancestry, is fluid in the same way as one’s beliefs and customs. In his text *In Living Colour* Emmanuel Larney writes

By *culture* I shall be referring to the way in which groups of people develop distinct patterns of life and give ‘expressive form’ to their social and material life experiences (see Billington *et al.* 1991; Hall 1981).¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ Homer L. Jernigan, “Pastoral Psychotherapy in a Rapidly Changing World: Implications of Cultural Change in Singapore and Taiwan,” in *Therapeutic Practice in a Cross-Cultural World: Theological, Psychological, and Ethical Issues*, ed. Carole R. Bohn (Decatur, GA: Journal of Pastoral Care Publications, 1995), 24.

¹⁰⁷ Aart M. van Beek, *Cross-Cultural Counseling* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996).

¹⁰⁸ van Beek, 25.

¹⁰⁹ Emmanuel Larney, *In Living Colour: An Intercultural Approach to Pastoral Care and Counseling* (London: Cassell, 1997), 31.

According to Lartey, culture is both unique and pervasive. He writes

In this sense, the culture of a group is the particular and distinctive 'way of life' of the group. This includes the ideas, values and meanings embodied in institutions and practices, in forms of social relationship, in systems of belief, in mores and customs, in the way objects are used and physical life organized.¹¹⁰

Kathleen Greider draws on the work of David Augsburger to define culture as “an essential anchor: culture is ‘patterns of human experience.’”¹¹¹ She continues by writing, “When I speak of ‘culture,’ I mean to be mindful of and responsive to any characteristics that a person shares with a group (small or large) of other people.”¹¹² Greider also understands culture as dynamic and un-bound. Culture is constructed in groups rather than in isolation and, therefore, as individuals we operate in numerous cultures. She writes, “A person or group does not have a culture but is many cultures, completely layered and dynamically interacting.”¹¹³ Furthermore, culture is both personal and social.

Finally, according to David Augsburger, culture is learned and is not simply determined by one’s biology, genetics or race.¹¹⁴ Culture is organismic -- it is like an organism or system in which many parts work together to construct a whole.¹¹⁵ Culture is dynamic.¹¹⁶ No culture is static and it is influenced both from within and outside the culture that facilitate change. Finally, culture is transacted through symbols.¹¹⁷

Augsburger writes, “Persons within a cultural tradition share common symbols with

¹¹⁰ Lartey, *In Living Colour*, 31.

¹¹¹ Kathleen Greider, “From Multiculturalism to Interculturality: Demilitarizing the Border between Personal and Social Dynamics Through Spiritual Receptivity,” *Journal of Supervision and Training in Ministry* 22 (2002): 44.

¹¹² Greider, “From Multiculturalism,” 44.

¹¹³ Greider, “From Multiculturalism,” 45.

¹¹⁴ David Augsburger, *Pastoral Counseling across Cultures* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986), 61.

¹¹⁵ Augsburger, 61.

¹¹⁶ Augsburger, 61.

¹¹⁷ Augsburger, 61.

common understandings. Those outside this symbol system take great risks in inferring the meanings of symbols from the context of their own system.”¹¹⁸

Four common elements emerge regarding culture based upon the definitions as posited by the above authors. First, the majority of definitions are constructed through dialogue with the discipline of anthropology. Second, culture involves the making of meaning by a group of people. Third, culture is formulated and emerges from a shared or collective lifestyle. Finally, culture is dynamic. Therefore, in light of such a broad definition of culture, should not all pastoral care and counseling be considered cross- or inter-cultural?

Defining Intercultural

Let us begin exploring the above question by first, defining the term intercultural and second, by examining how the literature addresses the diverse cultural foci of intercultural care and counseling. Whereas some authors employ the term “intercultural,” others prefer the term “cross-cultural.” Therefore, by examining how these authors variously employ the terms cross-cultural and intercultural a distinction will be made.

First, according to Charles R. Ridley, there are both broad and narrow constructions of cross-cultural counseling. Ridley writes

Construed broadly, cross-cultural counseling is concerned with any psychological intervention in which nationality, ethnicity, race, lifestyle, socioeconomic status, or other value affiliations differentiate the counselor from the client ... Construed narrowly, cross-cultural counseling is concerned with a therapeutic intervention in which one of the therapeutic participants is white, and the other participant is an ethnic minority.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁸ Augsburger, 61.

¹¹⁹ Charles R. Ridley, “Cross-Cultural Counseling in Theological Context,” *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 14, no. 4 (1986), 289.

Therefore, Ridley notes that based upon the broad construal of cross-cultural counseling any therapeutic relationship may be considered cross-cultural. However, in his narrow conception Ridley delimits cross-culturalism to difference in ethnicity. Ridley contends that culture is often understood in Aristotelian logic which states that one is either A or non-A. According to Ridley this logic creates “mutual exclusivity and involves a dichotomizing process. It assumes cultural and ethnic groups are discrete categories that do not (or should not) share anything in common with each other.”¹²⁰ Ridley deems this reductionism inadequate and dedicates the remainder of his article to transcending such either/or dichotomies in the counseling practice.

Second, Kathleen Greider defines interculturality as “engagement by a multicultural population in cross-cultural communication characterized not only by careful differentiation and measured collaboration but also by vibrant interrelatedness and, ideally, day-to-day cooperation.”¹²¹ According to Greider, culture is both personal and social. Therefore, as individuals we are each intercultural. As individuals we wrestle with our multiple cultures – our race, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status. In discussing an intercultural classroom experience, Greider delineates multiculturalism from interculturality, as the latter includes deep engagement, “vibrant interrelatedness,” “day-to-day cooperation” and not simply passive acceptance of the other.

In addition, Emmanuel Lartey elaborates on the distinction between cross-culturalism and interculturalism by providing an overview of four models of multicultural society. The first model in this rubric is monoculturalism – the belief that we are all really the same. Lartey writes, “For such a counselor little or no attention is paid to

¹²⁰ Ridley, “Cross-Cultural,” 289.

¹²¹ Greider, “From Multiculturalism,” 41.

differences that arise from cultural or social background ... As such they unwittingly insist upon the core values and cultural norms of the particular class or social group represented in the theory they espouse.”¹²²

The second model articulated by Larney is cross-culturalism. This model operates on the belief that “they” are totally different from “us.” Within such an understanding one recognizes the existence of difference yet contends that “the *boundaries* around groups are *fixed*, unalterable and to a degree impenetrable ... each group has an *identity* that is shared by all who belong to the group.”¹²³ Larney warns that adherents to this approach often create divisions among cultures through essentializing, that is construing characteristics as essential and “the only true or real expressions of a people.”¹²⁴ Larney places the work and theory of David Augsburger within the model of cross-culturalism.

The third model in this rubric is educational multi-culturalism. This model is based on the assertion “Aren’t they interesting: We need to learn as much as we can about them.”¹²⁵ In this model cultures are often victims of stereotyping in an effort to quickly learn the aspects and patterns of particular cultural groups. Larney writes

Pastoral counselors who operate on such premises are often sensitive and caring persons who seek as much information as they can obtain in order not to offend or act inappropriately with the cultural order. However what is lost in a dependence on this information is the spontaneity and sensitivity that is *sine qua non* of genuine human interaction.¹²⁶

¹²² Emmanuel Larney, “Pastoral Counselling in Multi-Cultural Contexts,” *International Perspectives on Pastoral Counseling* 5, no. 3-4 (2002): 322.

¹²³ Larney, “Pastoral Counselling in Multi-Cultural Contexts,” 323.

¹²⁴ Larney, “Pastoral Counselling in Multi-Cultural Contexts,” 325.

¹²⁵ Larney, “Pastoral Counselling in Multi-Cultural Contexts,” 325.

¹²⁶ Larney, “Pastoral Counselling in Multi-Cultural Contexts,” 327.

Finally, the fourth model in this rubric is termed intercultural and is based on the assertion that “every human person is in some respects (a) like all others (b) like some others and (c) like no other.”¹²⁷

Lartey further develops his definition of intercultural care in his book *In Living Colour: An Intercultural Approach to Pastoral Care and Counseling*.¹²⁸ He writes

The term intercultural, in preference to *cross-cultural* or *transcultural*, is used to attempt to capture the complex nature of the interaction between people who have been influenced by different cultures, social contexts and origins, and who themselves are often enigmatic composites of various strands of ethnicity, race, geography, culture and socio-economic setting.¹²⁹

According to Lartey, an intercultural approach recognizes the distinctive cultures of “an upper-middle-class male African American counselor with a poor female African American client; or a Caucasian heterosexual female counselor with a Caucasian lesbian client.”¹³⁰ Intercultural care does not resort to stereotyping or essentializing. Rather, it recognizes and values the many arenas of cultural diversity and seriously considers the influence of such cultures upon care and counseling.

David Augsburger also employs the term intercultural.¹³¹ He writes, “‘Intercultural’ is a better designation than the more frequently used ‘international,’ ‘universal,’ ‘multicultural,’ or ‘marginal.’ These imply that one ‘knows’ or ‘possesses’ multiple cultures, or is competent in all groups, or is on the boundary but not belonging to any people.”¹³² Therefore, an intercultural person cannot be an expert on any particular culture and yet is incapable of being “culture-free.” Augsburger writes, “The intercultural

¹²⁷ Lartey, “Pastoral Counselling in Multi-Cultural Contexts,” 327.

¹²⁸ Lartey, *In Living Colour*.

¹²⁹ Lartey, *In Living Colour*, 13.

¹³⁰ Lartey, *In Living Colour*, 14.

¹³¹ Augsburger.

¹³² Augsburger, 13.

person is not culture-free (a hypothetical and undesirable state). Rather, the person is culturally aware. Awareness of one's own culture can free one to disconnect identity from cultural externals and to live on the boundary, crossing over and coming back with increasing freedom."¹³³ As will be evidenced later when addressing the competencies of an intercultural counselor, Lartey takes issue with Augsburger's definition stating that it promotes an "us-them" mentality.

By examining the definitions of cross-cultural and intercultural care as put forward by Ridley, Greider, Lartey, and Augsburger, it is evident that a narrow understanding of cross-cultural care does not emphasize the multiple cultures in which all humanity is constantly interacting. A narrow definition of cross-cultural care mainly recognizes only differences of ethnicity and, based on Aristotelian logic, fosters us-them or A and not-A understandings of such difference. In contrast, the term intercultural emphasizes the diverse aspects of culture and calls the counselor or caregiver to take seriously the influences of such cultures upon both the lives of client and caregiver as well as the relationship at hand.

Foci of Intercultural Care and Counseling

This section aims to explore the cultural foci present in works by authors with broader conceptions of intercultural care. Specifically, do the authors adequately address cultural differences of gender, religion, socio-economic status, sexual orientation, family, language, relational status and a plethora of other cultural distinctions? Toward this end, we will first illustrate the areas of cultural distinction noted by the authors who more directly address the theory of intercultural care. Second, we will examine specific essays that focus on intercultural care surrounding particular cultural distinctions.

¹³³ Augsburger, 13.

As is evident above, intercultural care includes attention to aspects of culture beyond simply race and ethnicity. For instance, Lartey includes differences of socio-economic culture and geographic culture. Other authors also give mention to the diverse areas of culture impacting the practice of care and counseling. Although Paul G. Schurman directly addresses only differences of race and ethnicity in his article “Pastoral Care Across Cultures,” Schurman advocates exploration into other areas of cultural difference. Schurman indicates the need for awareness of other facets of culture when he writes, “It will be especially helpful to develop cross-cultural sensibilities to groups other than ethnic cultures, such as male-female, gay-straight, and hearing-deaf.”¹³⁴

Greider illustrates the diversity of cultures impacting classroom dynamics in theological education when she writes, “We wrestled with differences in the cultures of theological orientation, denominational identity, sex and gender, native language, social status, economic security and privilege, employment, vocational goals, relational status, age and generation, pedagogical expectations, and personality, just to name a few.”¹³⁵ Greider contends that recognition of such cultural diversity continually challenged those in the classroom to accept additional areas of cultural uniqueness and distinction.¹³⁶ In addition, Greider speaks to the rich forms of cultural diversity present in the United States. She writes

Interactions with persons of other religions, ethnicities, native languages, and nationalities occur with increasingly frequency. But these are only the newest forms of cultural plurality. Citizens of the United States have lived for generations amid many other forms of diversity; differences in class,

¹³⁴ Paul G. Schurman, “Pastoral Care across Cultures,” in *Handbook for Basic Types of Pastoral Care and Counseling*, ed. Howard W. Stone and William M. Clements (Nashville: Abingdon, 1991), 101.

¹³⁵ Greider, “From Multiculturalism,” 57.

¹³⁶ Greider, “From Multiculturalism,” 57.

gender, age, region, and education, for example, have long formed distinct cultures that make day-to-day interactions challenging.¹³⁷

van Beek also highlights areas of cultural distinction beyond race and ethnicity and explores the way differences of gender, communication style, religion, social class, and generation influence the counseling process. He encourages the cross-cultural or intercultural counselor to help raise awareness within the client regarding how these areas of culture influence the individual's situation.

Second, we now turn to examine how this broader definition of culture is employed in discussions on intercultural care and counseling. First, Kyriaki Karidoyances Fitzgerald examines the impact of a particular religious culture upon the practice of intercultural care in the article "Orthodox Christianity: Ghetto Religion or Catholic Faith? A Pastoral Psychotherapist's Observations."¹³⁸ Rather than study particular ethnic groups associated with the Orthodox tradition, Fitzgerald examines the Orthodox as a people, "as a human community," within the United States.¹³⁹ Fitzgerald contends that the Orthodox culture is in process. Utilizing Erickson's developmental stage theory, Fitzgerald analyzes the development of the group ego of the Orthodox people to answer the questions, "What if this 'ego personification' of the Orthodox were to come into my office for pastoral counseling or psychotherapy today? What would be the presenting issue? How would I engage him or her?"¹⁴⁰ Based on this analysis Fitzgerald contends that the Orthodox as a people are stuck in the adolescent stage of development in which

¹³⁷ Kathleen Greider, "Nonviolent Conflicts and Cultural Differences: Essentials for Practicing Peace," in *Choosing Peace Through Daily Practice: Redefining Paradigms*, ed. Ellen Ott Marshall (Cleveland: Pilgrim, 2005), 130.

¹³⁸ Kyriaki Karidoyances Fitzgerald, "Orthodox Christianity: Ghetto Religion or Catholic Faith? A Pastoral Psychotherapist's Observations," in *Therapeutic Practice in a Cross-Cultural World: Theological, Psychological, and Ethical Issues*, ed. Carole R. Bohn (Decatur, GA: Journal of Pastoral Care Publications, 1995).

¹³⁹ Fitzgerald, 37.

¹⁴⁰ Fitzgerald, 39.

they are searching for identity. The Orthodox as a people struggle to answer the question, “Am I an ethnic group or religious community?” “Am I a ghetto religion or the Catholic faith?” The proficient intercultural caregiver will examine the impact of this struggle in both the individual and the collective.

Homer L. Jernigan examines the impact of familial culture in his essay “Pastoral Psychotherapy in a Rapidly Changing World: Implications of Cultural Change in Singapore and Taiwan.”¹⁴¹ Jernigan utilizes a case study of a married couple in Singapore in order to examine the distinctive familial culture and its relation to Christianity in Singapore. Although Jernigan is analyzing a distinct geographic culture, he posits questions to be addressed when examining any marriage and family culture. Jernigan contends that resources for promoting stability in marriage are decreasing and therefore the marriage culture is changing. As such, Jernigan argues that therapy relevant to the changing cultural climate therapy is holistic. He writes

A holistic approach needs to include helping persons prepare for the realities of marriage and family life in their cultural context, cope with the difficulties that develop in marriage and family life, and find resources for individual, marital, and family growth in and through the opportunities and difficulties they experience.¹⁴²

Competencies in Intercultural Care and Counseling

In light of our understanding of the various cultural foci of intercultural care and counseling, we now turn to examine more closely the practice of such care. Specifically, in this section we will address the question, “What are the core competencies of intercultural care and counseling?” Given the breadth of literature under review, this section will be divided into two parts. First, we will consider the core competencies of

¹⁴¹ Jernigan.

¹⁴² Jernigan, 29-30.

intercultural care and counseling as advocated by van Beek, Augsburger, and Lartey.

Second, we will reflect on the following particular competencies posited by various authors: the acceptance of cultural complexity; the need for eclectic treatment modalities; the focus on communal and individual care; and the role of liberation and the prophetic.

First, let us investigate the core competencies of adequate intercultural counseling as conceived by van Beek. Toward this end, it is necessary first to examine the competencies of the counselor herself and, second, the requisites for competent care within the therapeutic process. van Beek identifies the following seven essential skills of the intercultural counselor: attending skills, responding skills, language skills, hermeneutical skills, diagnostic skills, integrative skills, and methodological skills. van Beek articulates specific and concrete recommendations for each of these seven skills. First, attending skills require one to examine where and how both counselor and clients are seated, cultural variances regarding eye contact and body posture, and the need to avoid addressing individuals on a first name basis until therapeutic rapport has been established.

Responding skills require the intercultural counselor to cultivate awareness regarding how her responses may be perceived by those of other cultures. van Beek contends that empathic statements such as “I hear you saying you feel hurt” can “sound contrived in a cross-cultural care setting. The caregiver needs to find a way to express care and understanding, and thus encourage self-expression and awareness of feelings, without widening the already significant cultural gap.”¹⁴³ Third, language skills require the counselor to omit use of idiomatic phrases and to ask questions more directly. Counselors are advised to think of the words most needed when speaking another

¹⁴³ van Beek, 31.

language and attempt to limit speech to the essential words. In addition, van Beek recommends that “a caregiver, instead of saying ‘So do you see yourself as a friendly person generally?’ could say to a person with limited English proficiency, ‘To you, are you friendly?’”¹⁴⁴ Finally, counselors should not fake knowledge of language or slang. Rather, they should take interest in acquiring new language and vocabulary skills.

Fourth, hermeneutic skill requires the counselor to cultivate empathy and the ability to seek shared frames of references. In order to attempt to interpret culturally distinctive experiences, the intercultural counselor identifies shared frames of reference in order to find commonalities on which to base empathy. The fifth skill advocated by van Beek is diagnostic skill. The counselor with intercultural competence will be able to utilize van Beek’s three diagnostic criteria, “worldview, sense of belonging, and identity,” effectively in order to formulate an accurate assessment and diagnosis.¹⁴⁵

Integrative skills accompany and complement diagnostic skill. Integrative skills allow the caregiver “to help care seekers integrate the worldview, identity, and sense of belonging with changing realities.”¹⁴⁶ Finally, methodological skills require the counselor to employ an eclectic approach to therapy. No single treatment modality can adequately address the complexities of intercultural dynamics; arguably this even includes the intercultural dynamics within one individual. According to van Beek, “The cross-cultural caregiver must realize that being locked into particular therapeutic methods, whether cognitive therapy, client-centered counseling, behavioral methods, or problem solving therapy, is a liability in cross-cultural pastoral care and counseling.”¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁴ van Beek, 33.

¹⁴⁵ van Beek, 36.

¹⁴⁶ van Beek, 36.

¹⁴⁷ van Beek, 37.

Based on these seven skills, van Beek constructs the following five principles for effective cross-cultural caregiving: “the caregiver should utilize appropriate attending and responding skills to respect interactional preferences; the caregiver should utilize language in a straightforward way with appropriate complexity; the caregiver should seek to deepen hermeneutical skills; the caregiver should practice diagnostic and integrative skills; and the caregiver should maintain methodological flexibility.”¹⁴⁸ He warns that effective intercultural counseling should steer clear of making vast generalizations or stereotypes based on cultural or ethnic background, while at the same time recognizing the possible commonalities shared by collective peoples.

Augsburger also speaks to the necessary competencies of effective intercultural counseling. As previously mentioned, Augsburger repeatedly returns to the need of the counselor to develop the skill of interpathy, a term he coined. According to Augsburger

Interpathy enables one to enter a second culture cognitively and affectively, to perceive and conceptualize the internal coherence that links the elements of the culture into a dynamic interrelatedness, and to respect that culture (with its strengths and weaknesses) as equally as valid as one’s own.¹⁴⁹

Based on this core skill, Augsburger then posits five “measurable and teachable characteristics” of “culturally capable counselor[s].”¹⁵⁰ According to Augsburger, culturally competent counselors have a “clear understanding of their own values and basic assumptions”; “a capacity for welcoming, entering into, and prizing other worldviews without negating their legitimacy”; a willingness to “seek sources of influence in both the person and the context, both the individual instance and the environment”; “are able to move beyond counseling theory, orientation, or technique and

¹⁴⁸ van Beek, 37.

¹⁴⁹ Augsburger, 14.

¹⁵⁰ Augsburger, 20.

be effective humans”; and “see themselves as universal citizens, related to all humans as well as distinct from all of them.”¹⁵¹ Augsburger warns against the sinful state of encapsulation in which the counselor is unable to reflect upon her own culture due to a fused state. The counselor must be willing to “cross over” into the world of the other because, as we are all human, no one is wholly other. He contends that presence is perhaps the most effective tool of the pastoral counselor and advocates dialogue as equal exchange of ideas and understanding between counselor and client. It is crucial to note that the ministry of presence is a foundational concept of pastoral care and counseling. A survey of Dykstra’s *Images of Pastoral Care: Classic Readings*, illustrates how the ministry of presence is central to many classic images of pastoral care, including Hiltner’s metaphor of shepherding, Nouwen’s metaphor of the wounded healer, Kornfeld’s metaphor of the gardener, and Donald Capps’s metaphor of the wise fool.¹⁵² James E. Dittes summarizes how the ministry of presence functions in pastoral counseling when he writes, “Fundamentally, the pastoral counselor does not try to do anything and is not struggling to make something happen, to make repairs, or to make changes. The intent of pastoral counseling is more profound than that. The pastoral counselor witnesses.”¹⁵³ Therefore, according to Augsburger, the presence of acceptance and understanding in a “foreign” context is foundational to interpathic care. He writes

In interpathic caring, I, the culturally different, seek to learn and fully entertain within my consciousness a foreign belief. I take a foreign perspective, base my thoughts on a foreign assumption, and allow myself to feel the resultant feelings and their cognitive and emotive consequences in my personality as I inhabit, insofar as I am capable of inhabiting, a foreign context.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵¹ Augsburger, 20-21.

¹⁵² Robert C. Dykstra, *Images of Pastoral Care: Classic Readings* (St. Louis: Chalice, 2005).

¹⁵³ James E. Dittes, *Pastoral Counseling: The Basics* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1999), 57.

¹⁵⁴ Augsburger, 30.

In light of our postmodern context, I believe Augsburger oversimplifies the possibilities of interpathy. It is naïve to assume that given our multiple cultural contexts we are ever able to fully “feel” as the other feels or take on a foreign perspective, although the goal and openness to do so are laudable. However, the concept of interpathy is foundational to the theory of many intercultural counselors and cannot be simply dismissed.

Lartey also draws on Augsburger’s concept of interpathy in his text *In Living Color: An Intercultural Approach to Pastoral Care and Counseling*.¹⁵⁵ According to Lartey the following are ten core characteristics of the competent intercultural counselor: listening, empathy, interpathy, respect, non-possessive warmth, genuineness, concreteness, confrontation, confidentiality, and immediacy.¹⁵⁶ Lartey views these ten skills as essential ingredients to competent counseling and contends that they “tend to be expressed in nonverbal ways, such as through gestures, posture, tone of voice and facial expression.”¹⁵⁷ Lartey expounds on each of these skills; however, as listening, empathy, interpathy, non-possessive warmth, genuineness and confidentiality are skills commonly addressed and advocated for, I will examine now to the competencies of concreteness, confrontation, and immediacy.

An essential component of effective intercultural counseling is concreteness. Amidst emotional confusion and distorted thinking, in addition to other layers of communication nuances, it is often difficult to be both concrete and succinct. According to Lartey, “Concreteness has to do with being definite, real and specific in what is said. The task is to avoid vagueness as much as is possible ... Concreteness aims at plain

¹⁵⁵ Lartey, *In Living Colour*.

¹⁵⁶ Lartey, *In Living Colour*, 89.

¹⁵⁷ Lartey, *In Living Colour*, 88.

speech and direct communication in which messages are as clear, undistorted and uncontaminated as possible.”¹⁵⁸ In addition, the competent intercultural counselor may employ confrontation in order to highlight unnoticed assets and resources or to question and invite analysis of the client’s behavior. Lartey emphasizes the need to do this at a point in the therapeutic process in which the client is comfortable and trusting of the counselor and he advocates two means of confronting. He illustrates how this may be done when he writes

First, offering a plain description. Here the counselor describes in clear and concrete terms what s/he is beginning to see as self-defeating or counterproductive behavior or patterns of feeling or thought in the client. Second, the counselor encourages the client to act in the way they (the client) express a desire to and then to return to the next session for evaluation and discussion of their action and the feelings and consequences which went with it.¹⁵⁹

In addition to concreteness and confrontation, immediacy is also a necessary characteristic. Immediacy requires the counselor to pay attention to the here and now as is common in Gestalt therapy. Lartey writes, “Immediacy requires awareness, know-how, communication skills and assertiveness. Counselors must be willing to monitor what is going on within the counseling relationship.”¹⁶⁰ Immediacy requires the counselor to feel comfortable raising sometimes uncomfortable topics and issues and to effectively recognize cues in both self and other.

In addition to the rubrics of competency provided by van Beek, Augsburger, and Lartey, convergence exists among various authors regarding specific competencies of the intercultural caregiver. The following four themes represent areas of competency frequently called for by the authors under examination: the acceptance of cultural

¹⁵⁸ Lartey, *In Living Colour*, 99.

¹⁵⁹ Lartey, *In Living Colour*, 100.

¹⁶⁰ Lartey, *In Living Colour*, 101.

complexity; the need for eclectic treatment modalities; the consideration of both the individual and the communal; and the call for a focus on liberation and the prophetic. First, K. Samuel Lee, Benoni Silva-Netto, and Emmanuel Lartey all contend that competent intercultural counseling requires an acceptance and embracing of the complexity of culture. Lee advocates the overcoming of three challenges in multicultural ministry and caregiving. They are “unintentional racism,” “making visible the invisibility of monoculturalism and ‘Whiteness,’” and “embracing the complexity of multicultural lived realities.”¹⁶¹ It is this third challenge currently under consideration. According to Lee, the human tendency is to construct binaries and oversimplify complex matters, thus creating false idols. Lee draws on the work of Foster and Brelsford to advocate an acceptance of multiculturalism and complex reality rather than favoring monocultural understandings and perspectives. Quoting Foster and Brelsford, Lee contends that competent intercultural care requires that we “seek ‘to live in the multiplicity of languages and cultures rather than to master them – to live with rather than to resolve ambiguity.’ They say this is anew way of being in community.”¹⁶²

Silva-Netto echoes the need to embrace the complexity of culture. Like many authors, Silva-Netto contends that traditional pastoral counseling aimed to adjust individuals to the dominant culture so that one might act in accordance to societal rules and norms. In so doing, counselors refused to accept the complexity of cultures. Silva-Netto writes, “On many occasions, pastoral counselors are faced with a choice between helping persons adjust to the norms of society or working to change society’s attitude to a

¹⁶¹ K. Samuel Lee, “Becoming Multicultural Dancers: The Pastoral Practitioner in a Multicultural Society,” *Journal of Pastoral Care* 55, no. 4 (2001): 389.

¹⁶² K. Samuel Lee, “Becoming Multicultural Dancers,” 394.

more positive acceptance of the culturally different.”¹⁶³ In contrast, Silva-Netto advocates becoming a “cosmopolitan counselor.” Such a counselor embraces differences and does not live within the confines of one dominant view point. This counselor avoids cultural stereotypes and prefers to examine “culture-personality systems.” Silva-Netto writes, “These relatively stable but immensely unscientific opinions into which we tend to box people are of a generalizing and evaluative nature – emotionally prejudicial rather than scientifically observational.”¹⁶⁴

Finally, Lartey also advocates for the acceptance of cultural complexity. Lartey argues that culture is dynamic, never static. Therefore, competent intercultural care “is opposed to *reductionism* and *stereotyping* in any form.”¹⁶⁵ Rather, Lartey contends that intercultural care embraces plurality as basic to life. He writes, “Interculturality values *diversity* most highly. In an intercultural approach, culture’s influence on belief and behavior is taken very seriously, without it being seen as determining them, or as a sole factor to be explored in examining them.”¹⁶⁶ In this, Lartey recognizes that belief and behavior cannot simply be written off as culturally determinative; likewise, individuals should not be counseled into adopting the values and behaviors of the dominant culture. Interculturality requires pastoral counselors to affirm three basic principles – “*contextuality, multiple perspectives* and *authentic participation*.”¹⁶⁷ Contextuality leads the pastoral counselor to assess all beliefs and behaviors in light of cultural framework. Multiple perspectives requires pastoral counselors to recognize and value distinctive perspectives and avoid monocausal explanations. Authentic participation “affirms the

¹⁶³ Silva-Netto, 133.

¹⁶⁴ Silva-Netto, 136.

¹⁶⁵ Lartey, *In Living Colour*, 31.

¹⁶⁶ Lartey, *In Living Colour*, 33.

¹⁶⁷ Lartey, *In Living Colour*, 33.

right of all to participate in discussion and examination of an issue on their own terms.”¹⁶⁸ Lartey grounds these three basic principles in the postmodern context and the assertion that “knowledge is seen as located and contextual” and therefore always “partial, fragmented and incomplete.”¹⁶⁹

A second competency named by many authors is the need to employ eclectic treatment modalities. Schurman advocates a departure from traditional modes of treatment and theories. He writes, “Gaining expertise and sensitivity to minister across cultural boundaries may require setting aside the theories and techniques with which we are comfortable as well as acquiring some new approaches that may be more relevant.”¹⁷⁰ According to Schurman, all counseling theories and approaches have inherent cultural and political assumptions. Therefore, he advocates an eclectic and interdisciplinary approach that foregoes any attempt to acculturate the client to the counselor’s own world view and value system. He writes, “To the extent that we believe that any one theory of human nature is universally true or that any one approach to helping is applicable to all groups, there is a high likelihood of ineffectiveness and even exploitation.”¹⁷¹

Lartey also advocates for the employment of various treatment methods in his article “Globalization, Internationalization, and Indigenization of Pastoral Care and Counseling.” In addressing the formation and self-understanding of intercultural caregivers, Lartey writes the following

Formation also needs to encourage flexibility and the ability to use a variety of approaches in caregiving activities. Making particular theories and practices normative for all is no longer appropriate or acceptable. American and other Western pastoral caregivers need to recognize their

¹⁶⁸ Lartey, *In Living Colour*, 33.

¹⁶⁹ Lartey, *In Living Colour*, 38.

¹⁷⁰ Schurman, 99-100.

¹⁷¹ Schurman, 100.

heritage and celebrate its usefulness in their own context. Similarly, they need to realize that the dominant approaches they cherish are not universally useful.¹⁷²

In addition, Lartey recommends that American pastoral counselors evaluate whether or not the chosen treatment modality and approach are suited to the “least of these.” That is to say, does the therapeutic approach avail care to the poor and marginalized or simply to the dominant culture?

van Beek echoes the need to set aside previously normative treatment modalities and theories. By utilizing a case study of a second generation Korean American youth, van Beek illustrates the danger of focusing on “analytical psychological” aspects of issues as they arise in the counseling or caregiving context. In doing so, we wrongly prioritize philosophical assumptions which are culturally bound. van Beek writes:

I am suggesting that we shift from predominantly deductive to predominantly inductive reasoning to arrive at a caregiving methodology or methodologies. This means that the experience of the person needing care becomes the starting point of the caregiver’s methodology. As far as possible, the counselor must set aside the assumptions of the counseling method used.¹⁷³

Because both psychological theory and treatment modalities emerge from particular contexts, the competent intercultural counselor meets the individual client where she is at, hearing her story as the starting point of care rather than beginning with a treatment modality embedded in seemingly universal yet particularistic beliefs and values.

Finally, Ridley also advises flexibility in both therapeutic approach and assessment. He writes:

¹⁷² Emmanuel Lartey, “Globalization, Internationalization, and Indigenization of Pastoral Care and Counseling,” in *Pastoral Care and Counseling: Redefining the Paradigms*, ed. Nancy Ramsay (Nashville: Abingdon, 2004), 107.

¹⁷³ van Beek, 16.

Therapists must employ therapeutic approaches that are culturally sensitive and flexible. They need to develop effective tools to work with other cultures in more than superficial ways. Flexibility permits therapists to make appropriate responses to cultural variability.¹⁷⁴

Ridley grounds this flexibility on the Christian and biblical imperative of liberation from oppressive forces.

A third competency regards the significance of the individual and the communal. This competency can be conceived in two ways. The first is the need for care in both the communal and individual dimensions. The second is consideration of the inextricable relationship of the personal and the social within the individual. Emmanuel Lartey, Jorge Cardenas Brito, Aart van Beek, Charles Ridley, and Kathleen Greider each address this aspect of competent intercultural care. First, Lartey contends that “the person-to-person work of a pastoral counselor cannot be divorced from the social conditions prevalent in a community. As such, care for the communal needs should be seen as a pastoral concern.”¹⁷⁵ Toward this end Lartey encourages the caregiver to consider the “community as client” which goes against the individualism of the West but privileges the theology and history of Christianity.

Second, Brito reflects on the need for transcending the limits of individual care toward communal care.¹⁷⁶ Based on a case study of Chilean culture between 1970 and 1990, Brito contends that contextual pastoral care requires care on many levels. During that period Chilean society was divided on many fronts and churches attempting to provide care recognized that individual pastoral care and counseling were simply inadequate. Brito writes, “The task became a challenge: to transfer experience, practices,

¹⁷⁴ Ridley, “Cross-Cultural,” 293.

¹⁷⁵ Lartey, “Globalization,” 108.

¹⁷⁶ Jorge Cardenas Brito, “Case Based Reflections on Contextual Pastoral Care: My Experience in Chile,” in *Pastoral Care and Context*, ed. Otto Stange (Amsterdam: VU University Press, 1992).

techniques and knowledge of care at the individual level to the acting leadership, and pastoral care of large anonymous groups that could be reached only by public media, journalists, radio, etc.”¹⁷⁷ Within the Chilean cultural context, the division between the structural and the individual needed to be bridged, and forms of care toward that end needed to be developed.

Third, according to van Beek, just as the competent intercultural counselor recognizes the unity of experience within the individual, that is to say the way all aspects of one’s life engage to form a whole, the same unity must be recognized across individuals within the larger community. van Beek criticizes the European egocentric approach to counseling that privileges the individual over the communal. In contrast to such individualized cultures, van Beek contends that “holistic” cultures are organic and emphasize “the community over the individual.”¹⁷⁸ Unfortunately, vanBeek moves from hyperindividualism to hypercommunalism and fails to note how communities are rarely willing and able to care for all individuals. Nevertheless, according to van Beek, the intercultural caregiver will not only strive to provide competent care to the community but will also recognize how community culture, whether dominant or less dominant, influences the unity of the individual’s experience. The communal cannot be divorced from the individual and vice versa.

Fourth, Ridley also addresses the relationship between the individual and the social.¹⁷⁹ According to Ridley, one facet of responsible Christian counseling is to help the client recognize the role of culture. Ridley writes, “Counselors can help their clients understand that the cause of their problems may not be themselves but the culture or the

¹⁷⁷ Brito, 19.

¹⁷⁸ van Beek, 17.

¹⁷⁹ Ridley, “Cross-Cultural.”

oppression of other groups.”¹⁸⁰ This approach aids the individual in recognizing when their problems are the result of systems of oppression and encourages clients to act toward change in such oppressive cultures when appropriate.

Finally, Greider argues that spiritual receptivity is imperative in order to increase intercultural competency. Greider contends that caregivers need to reexamine the relationship between the personal and the social. Due to a tendency to divorce and bifurcate the personal and the social, caregivers often fail to examine the reciprocal influences of each. Greider writes

Such masking decreases human capacity for interculturality because it conceals the ways that personal cultures and social cultures create each other in every human interaction. One cost of this obfuscation is that self-reflection, though increasingly popular, easily and often ignores the relationship between culture and one’s ‘inner’ life.¹⁸¹

Therefore, not only does competence in intercultural care and counsel require the diligent examination of the dialectic formation of the personal and the social, it also requires that care be provided at both the individual and the communal level.

A final competency informing adequate intercultural care and counsel is the call for a focus on liberation and the prophetic. Bridget Clare McKeever critiques traditional modes of care and counseling through a case study of her own experience as a white, middle class nun, providing counsel to a Hispanic family.¹⁸² McKeever’s methodology is similar to practical theology in that she examines a case through the lens of liberation theology in order to call for revised praxis. Based on dialogue with liberation theology, McKeever contends that “the question of how God is acting in a person’s life can no

¹⁸⁰ Ridley, “Cross-Cultural,” 294.

¹⁸¹ Greider, “From Multiculturalism,” 47.

¹⁸² Bridget Clare McKeever, “Social Systems in Pastoral Care,” in *Handbook for Basic Types of Pastoral Care and Counseling*, ed. Howard W. Stone and William M. Clements (Nashville: Abingdon, 1991).

longer be asked. Rather, we must ask how God is acting in a person's life and in the multiple systems in which his or her life is entwined."¹⁸³ McKeever finds the "present office-counseling system" to be "poorly equipped to address the phenomenon of systemic disgrace and to facilitate systemic grace."¹⁸⁴ In light of such analysis, McKeever advocates for an expansion of traditional methods of care to include exploration into the systemic nature of problems, interfacing with social service agencies to provide more holistic care, and providing follow-up care by the congregation or wider community. All of these revised methods of care reflect McKeever's call for a more liberatory practice of intercultural care and counseling.

Edwin Friedman examines how three groups of biblical prophets speak to necessary changes in the nature of pastoral care and counseling.¹⁸⁵ According to Friedman the prophets operated from a "differentiated position," were clear and succinct in their message, and enacted "emotional stamina. They stayed on course."¹⁸⁶ In addition, they pushed boundaries and at times acted outrageously and absurdly, and yet did so in order to effect change. Friedman argues that psychotherapy is always going to attempt to decrease the world's anxiety by formulating new and unique treatment modalities. In contrast to this approach, Friedman advocates embracing the prophetic role of pastoral counseling. He writes, "If the world of pastoral counselling is to be influenced by the prophetic movements it must avoid to be caught up idolatrously in the way psychotherapy has dealt with the anxiety of society, which is just to take the latest

¹⁸³ McKeever, 75.

¹⁸⁴ McKeever, 77.

¹⁸⁵ Edwin H. Friedman, "The Relevance of the Biblical Prophets for Pastoral Counselling," in *Pastoral Care and Context*, ed. Otto Stange (Amsterdam: VU University Press, 1992).

¹⁸⁶ Friedman, 59.

symptom that everybody is worried about and try to figure out how to fix it.”¹⁸⁷ Rather, pastoral counseling is called to liberate individuals by enacting the four prophetic practices evidenced above which, although not universal, speak to all cultures of the oppressed.

Finally, Lartey explores the intersection of pastoral care and liberation theology at the following four points: in concrete experience, social analysis, hermeneutical analysis, and the pastoral praxis of liberation. According to Lartey, liberation theology has much to offer the practice of pastoral care and counseling. Lartey advises that just as liberation theologians begin with the concrete lived experience, so too should the pastoral caregiver. This requires a valuing of both the personal and the political. It requires challenging stereotypes and listening in a way that meets individuals and communities where their own story is told. Lartey writes, “The power to define one’s own experience on one’s own terms is a vital part of liberation.”¹⁸⁸

The influences of liberation theology call pastoral caregivers to engage in social analysis. Human suffering should be placed within the context of systemic and oppressive social structures. In addition, Lartey contends that intercultural caregivers must employ a hermeneutic of suspicion with an eye toward the liberatory. Voices from the margins need to be heard. Experiences, stories, and sources of authority, such as the Bible, cannot be uncritically accepted. Based on such influences from liberation theology, Lartey contends that a pastoral praxis of liberation occurs at two levels – pedagogical and social-therapeutic. This includes the individual as well as the wider community and strives for liberation at both individual and communal levels.

¹⁸⁷ Friedman, 47-48.

¹⁸⁸ Lartey, *In Living Colour*, 126.

Intercultural Pastoral Care and Counseling and Homelessness

Intercultural awareness and competency is essential to pastoral care and counseling within the homeless context. Caregivers need to recognize the multiplicity of cultures rather than understand culture as simply synonymous to race and ethnicity. Therefore, the four common elements in the authors' definitions of culture – the use of the discipline of anthropology, the notion that culture involves meaning-making by a group of people, the idea that culture is formulated and emerges from a shared or collective lifestyle, and the acceptance that culture is dynamic – all aid in the recognition of the multiple cultures operant in the lives of homeless individuals and families. The various cultures posited by the authors, including gender, age, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, religion, geographic location, family background, language, relational status, etc., are all present within the homeless population. Furthermore, additional cultures emerge that are unique to the homeless population. For instance, cultural distinctions arise between the chronically homeless, the episodically homeless, and the single incidence homeless. Cultural distinctions demarcate those living in SROs from those living in shelters from those living literally on the street. One's location within homeless culture, and often one's cultural capital, differs if one has children, if one has a car, or if one has family or a network of support. Therefore, as the authors contend, culture is continuously created. It is dynamic rather than static, and this holds true for the culture of homelessness as well.

Second, according to both Greider and Lartey, intercultural care necessitates a level of deep engagement. Greider terms this “vibrant interrelatedness” and “day-to-day

cooperation.”¹⁸⁹ Intercultural caregiving is not a passive act, but a commitment to a profound level of engagement. This deep engagement is also the distinction between what Lartey terms “multi-cultural” vs. “intercultural” care. If multicultural is defined as I have discussed above, then multi-cultural caregivers are interested and invested in difference – the “aren’t they unique and interesting” perspective. Caregiving in this way loses “the spontaneity and sensitivity that is *sine qua non* of genuine human interaction.”¹⁹⁰ Competent intercultural caregiving depends upon the willingness of both caregiver and careseeker to deeply engage one another in their uniqueness and difference, as well as the commonalities universal to all humans. True intercultural caregiving is essential for work within the homeless context due to both the cultural diversity of the homeless population as well as the diversity of needs and concerns. Multi-cultural care, according to Lartey’s definition, would lead the pastoral counselor to formulate her own assessment regarding what is necessary for the client, which would often involve adjustment to the status quo. In contrast, intercultural care engages in differences in a way that makes the homeless client the authority on her own life. When the homeless client waits in line for government assistance, meets with her case manager at the shelter, and talks to her daughter’s teacher at school, she is rarely recognized as the authority over her life. Everyone else knows better. Intercultural care necessitates that caregivers engage clients at a deep level, thus empowering them to recognize their own authority and ability. The goal is growth and health rather than adjustment to cultural norms.

This leads us into an examination of the core competencies of intercultural care. Based on the literature under review, the following four themes represent areas of

¹⁸⁹ Greider, “From Multiculturalism,” 41.

¹⁹⁰ Lartey, “Pastoral Counselling in Multi-Cultural Contexts,” 327.

competency frequently called for by the authors under examination: the acceptance of cultural complexity; the need for eclectic treatment modalities; the consideration of both the individual and the communal; and the call for a focus on liberation and the prophetic. First, as posited above, the acceptance of cultural complexity means that the aim of pastoral counseling is not adjustment toward some culturally-bound status quo. Silva-Netto advocates the need for “cosmopolitan counselors” who recognize diversities and do not impose adjustment. Although not explicit in Silva-Netto’s writing, the concept of cosmopolitan counselors seems to suggest a sophisticated knowledge of the world, gained either through global travel or, in the case of homelessness, through “travel” in the welfare and other systems. Work with the homeless necessitates that the counselor be aware of her values and not encourage the adaptation of what she determines to be normative cultural values by the client. The client’s own goals need to be recognized and valued as they are often culturally influenced and may not be shared by the counselor. Next, competent intercultural caregiving requires drawing on a variety of treatment modalities. In essence, the goal of this research is to determine which modalities are most relevant for the healing, sustaining, guiding, reconciling, liberation, nurturance and empowerment of those experiencing homelessness. It is impossible for all of these functions to be performed using one treatment modality. Moreover, due to their vast cultural diversities, individuals and families within the homeless context also require unique approaches. The competent intercultural caregiver assesses the client’s needs in light of culture and values and draw from various appropriate modalities.

Third, competent intercultural caregiving is aimed not only at the individual but also at the communal context. In distinction to a skid row locale, the residents of Our

House are largely removed from the wider homeless community. Nevertheless, appropriate care goes beyond one-on-one sessions. The weekly group counseling sessions at Our House are one way that communal care is given. In addition, at times residents have attended counseling with a partner or family member who does not reside in the shelter but is intimately involved in their concerns as well as their growth. Finally, this competency asks pastoral caregivers of any ilk to advocate on a systemic level for the care of the homeless. Intercultural care is not limited to psychotherapy but requires advocacy at the communal level.

Finally, competent intercultural caregiving focuses on the liberatory and the prophetic. This means a recognition of how the “symptoms” presented by the homeless client relate to the wider system. As McKeever recommended, it means not just asking how God is working in one’s life but seeking to understand how God is working in the systems impacting one’s life as well. Homelessness is not simply a personality problem or a character defect. It has complex systemic causes. Therefore, focusing simply on the symptoms presented by the homeless client obfuscates the systemic causes in a way that often leads to the blaming of the victim. A focus on the liberatory and prophetic aspects of care is essential in order to provide culturally-relevant care to any homeless individual or family.

The literature on intercultural care and counseling offers significant contribution to our exploration of caring for the homeless. However, the experience of homelessness also offers some correctives to the literature. Foremost, although Augsburger’s theory and understanding of interpathy has been criticized by Lartey and others, it is important to note the potential harm that such an approach poses for work with the homeless.

Augsburger notes that in interpathic caring, the caregiver seeks to take on, to whatever extent possible, the “foreign” perspective of the careseeker. The difficulty that this poses for the homeless careseeker is that the cultural implications of homelessness are both vast and profound. Foremost, the homeless careseeker comes with her own cultural locations, which are always unique from those of the caregiver. On top of those uniquenesses, the experience of homelessness significantly impacts various aspects of the careseeker’s cultural location. For instance, if the careseeker is employed, there is often shame involved in hiding one’s homelessness from one’s employer. If the careseeker is a parent, his parenting is impacted by the struggles of parenting in a fishbowl and the fear associated with losing one’s children. If the careseeker never graduated from high school there may be significant anxiety about securing employment. The bottom line is that the experience of homelessness touches all areas of one’s life and even the culturally competent caregiver will find it difficult to “take on” the homeless person’s “foreign perspective.” Moreover, while empathy is essential, unless the caregiver has been homeless, any attempt to convince the homeless client that the careseeker can imagine how she feels is disingenuous and highly counterproductive.

Summary

Liberation theology, the theology of Martin Luther King, Jr., pastoral theology of economics, and theory in intercultural pastoral care and counseling each offer unique insights into the practice of pastoral care and counseling in the homeless context. Liberation theology and King’s theology illustrate the importance of solidarity with the homeless and treating homeless individuals as “somebody” rather than “something.” Pastoral theology of economics exemplifies why Christians are called to care for

homeless individuals and families, and offers specific correctives for the provision of such care. Theories of intercultural care and counseling demonstrate the need to recognize the cultural complexity of each homeless individual and calls caregivers to develop competency in intercultural caregiving. In some cases, the experience of homelessness tenders important correctives to the literature as well. Thick description of current practice in dialogue with the theory and research of selected sources of authority creates a foundation upon which we now turn to call for revised pastoral care and counseling praxis in the homeless context.

CHAPTER 5

TRANSFORMING SHELTERS INTO SANCTUARIES: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR REVISED PRAXIS

Introduction

Following the above explication of current practice and the insights from interdisciplinary theory, in alignment with Browning's practical theological method, we now turn to construct a call for revised praxis. This chapter outlines recommended praxis for pastoral counseling services provided by the counselors of The Clinebell Institute as well as pastoral care services provided by both the shelter staff and the volunteers. Finally, recommendations are made for how changes in the shelter can enable it to serve as a sanctuary to homeless residents.

Revised Pastoral Counseling Praxis

The insights of research partners as well as the wisdom of the interdisciplinary literature indicates the need for revised praxis in three main areas: assessment, individual counseling and group counseling.

Assessment

In response to the theoretical review, four revisions in assessment are called for. First, it is the researcher's recommendation that the pastoral psychotherapeutic assessment be a component of the shelter's intake process prior to the family's acceptance to the shelter program. Current practice consists of a phone interview with the housing manager followed by an in-person intake interview with the case manager. Conducting the pastoral psychotherapeutic intake and assessment prior to entry into the shelter would allow the housing manager, case manager, and counselor to determine collaboratively both the client's strengths and growing edges. This is in alignment with

the team approach advocated by O'Connor.¹ It maximizes the client's limited ninety days in the shelter by eradicating the week to two-week delay that often occurs between admittance and the initial case management and counseling sessions. While the content of the intake should remain the same,² emphasis should be placed on the client's strengths and ability to cope, as indicated by Thrasher and Mowbray.³ This requires intentional exploration into how the client and his or her family are coping with homelessness, as well as thorough attention to the client's strengths and motivation in the overall assessment. Although clients may present with problems or concerns, strengths-based assessment during the psychotherapeutic intake allows the counselor to highlight the client's survival skills, problem-solving skills, and resilience. This will aid in establishing a therapeutic rapport and is in alignment with a solution focused approach. We will return later to explicate the many benefits of solution focused therapy for work in the homeless context.

As the shelter has only one room for a single female, assessment with homeless clients needs to include review of the family's functioning. Felix and Samuels make numerous recommendations, yet, in an effort to focus on the family's strengths, the following topics are essential: positive parenting skills possessed by the client(s)/parent(s); a recent time when things were going well for the family; and what, if any, psychoeducation would aid the client or couple in their relationship and parenting skills.⁴ Specific attention should be paid to the coping strategies that enabled the client to keep his or her family together.

¹ O'Connor, 225.

² See Appendix C for an overview of the areas addressed during an intake interview.

³ Thrasher and Mowbray, 99.

⁴ Felix and Samuels, 37.

Although stages should always be understood as fluid rather than discrete, assessment involves determining the client's current stage of homelessness. Kuhlman, DeOllos, and Corcoran all present stages or typologies to aid us in such determination. First, Kuhlman posits the following three stages of the homeless experience: the alarm stage, the resistance stage, and exhaustion stage. Determining the client's stage will aid both the pastoral counselor and the case manager in tailoring effective care. For instance, those in the alarm stage are often quite open to both counseling and case management services, whereas those in the resistance stage often resent the dependence that they feel and their felt lack of mastery over their own lives. By the exhaustion stage emotions are blunted and the fight for daily survival seems to eclipse all other needs. The typology put forth by DeOllos also aids in assessment. DeOllos cited five stages of the shelterization process akin to Kuhlman's three stages. Clients in the latter stages often lack hope and empowerment. By the fourth and fifth stages they feel their actions are worthless and they begin to accept homelessness as "home." Finally, as we will later examine, solution focused therapy is an appropriate intervention for clients at all stages of homelessness. According to Jacqueline Corcoran, solution focused therapists are also aided in assessing which, of three types of clients, the client best represents: the customer, the complainant, and the visitor. According to Corcoran

The customer type of relationship is the client who is motivated and willing to participate in the change process. The complainant type of relationship is motivated chiefly for change in another person rather than for change in the self. The visitor type of relationship is a client who is typically unmotivated and is attending only because he or she has been mandated to do so.⁵

⁵ Jacqueline Corcoran, *Building Strengths and Skills: A Collaborative Approach to Working with Clients* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 8.

By utilizing the stages or typologies of Kuhlman, DeOllos, and Corcoran, while at the same time recognizing the fluidity of such stages, the pastoral counselor is better able to understand the client's behaviors without attributing them to pathology, while at the same time providing a forum in which the client can regain her motivation, sense of agency and hope. This also allows the pastoral counselor to work more effectively in collaboration with the case manager. Such an approach is grounded in King's theology of somebodiness and aids the counselor in avoiding "thingification" of the client. In addition, it heeds liberation theology's warning not to pathologize the homeless for their poverty, but to recognize the way in which their circumstance is produced in relationship to the rich.

Individual Counseling

As indicated by Shinn, therapeutic approaches with homeless clients can both contribute to and result from how one understands the causes of homelessness. For instance, in adapting a person-centered approach the pastoral counselor focuses on individual problems and thus is more likely to adopt a "blame the victim" stance while failing to account for structural factors. Therefore, it is essential to adopt a therapeutic approach that reflects both the experiences of the research partners and the wisdom of the interdisciplinary theoretical literature. This section presents the recommended changes required of the pastoral counselor and of the pastoral counseling process.

Revisions in the Pastoral Counselor and the Training Process

Pastoral counselors need to develop five areas of competency in order to work effectively with clients in the homeless context. First, based upon the research partners'

comments, caregivers need to treat clients with dignity and respect. This has significant implications for various aspects of the counseling process, but in this regard it requires that the pastoral counselor engage the client with the attitude that homelessness can happen to anyone. Rather than being treated as if they are to blame for their circumstance, research partners valued the recognition on the part of caregivers that they too are vulnerable to the anguish of homelessness. This may be even more true in light of the current economic recession and what Jeffery Thomas terms the “oxymoronic middle class homeless.”⁶ In accepting vulnerability to homelessness the pastoral counselor mitigates the stigma of homelessness that so negatively impacts the client’s identity.

Second, pastoral counselors need to engage clients as if, in Gutierrez’s terms, Christ is in the neighbor. This entails not only treating the client with dignity, but as a precious child of God. King’s theology of “somebodyness” helps pastoral counselors to recognize that it is not what somebody does, but who they are as a part of God’s creation, that gives them value. This is important because research partners reported that they could tell if counselors were truly caring or if they were simply going through the motions. Work in this context is not easy and the risk of burn out is great; however, pastoral counselors can find ways to care for themselves so as to sustain their capacity to recognize that everybody is somebody and that Christ truly lives in the neighbor.

On a related note, pastoral counselors need to recognize and acknowledge the power, knowledge and authority that they bring with them to the therapeutic relationship in order to work toward an equitable connection. While it is naïve to think that any therapeutic relationship could be egalitarian, according to Kuhlman, the many resistances

⁶ Jeffery Thomas, “Socioeconomic Diversity: Minimizing Culture Shock in the Counseling Process,” lecture, American Association of Pastoral Counselors, Pacific Region Meeting, Claremont, CA, October 10, 2009.

on the part of the homeless client require equity.⁷ He notes that this is why clergy are often more easily received by homeless on the streets as they are more willing to adopt a peer-type relationship. This attitude is supported by King's understanding of agape and humanity's interrelatedness. In other words, if the homeless client is suffering, the counselor is *de facto* suffering as well, as we are all part of an interrelated and interconnected "living human web." According to Gutierrez, if we are to advocate on behalf of the poor we need to join them and meet them in their context. While recognizing her authority, the pastoral counselor needs to avoid an authoritarian attitude in order to join the client in her context.⁸ The first step toward this end is to share power, as advocated in Johnson's critique of service practices versus justice practices, toward more egalitarian relatedness. By joining in the life of the homeless in such a way, the pastoral counselor is better able to enact what Greider terms "vibrant interrelatedness," an essential aspect of any intercultural caregiving.

Thus, the fourth change in the pastoral counselor is that of developing competencies as an intercultural caregiver. Intercultural counseling requires a recognizing and valuing of the various cultural locations of the client and acceptance of the cultural complexity of both the client's life and the intercultural relationship. Rather than encouraging clients to adapt to the current status quo, competent intercultural pastoral counselors focus on the client's need for liberation and serve as a prophetic voice in the client's life. Pastoral counselors need to tailor their approach by calling on eclectic treatment modalities rather than simply thinking all homeless clients' needs are the same.

⁷ *Equitable* relationships differ from *equal* or *egalitarian* relationships in that they seek justice and fairness while recognizing that those involved in the relationship are not the same or and that their different roles are imbued systemically with unequal power.

⁸ Pastoral counselors can recognize their power and authority without conveying an authoritarian attitude to the client.

Competent intercultural counseling requires awareness of how communal and systemic factors influence the client's situation and the education of the client on such matters. Additional training is needed at The Clinebell Institute, and other similar organizations, to help pastoral counselors understand the complexities of homelessness as well as the impact of racism and classism.

Finally, the pastoral counselor needs to accept that she will not be able to successfully form a therapeutic connection with all homeless clients. Research partners reported cases in which they just did not “click” with the counselor. As previously mentioned, homeless clients, like many clients, may exhibit or feel resistance to counseling. In some instances this may be because their basic needs have yet to be met. In other instances it may be that the client has been the victim of discrimination by counselors of other races, religions, or socioeconomic classes, or by therapists whose first language is different from that of the client. It is essential for the counselor to develop a non-defensive posture and respect the client's resistance by responding with compassion. This is also essential for instances when the client feels she does not “click” with the counselor. As a result, The Clinebell Institute's staff should include a diversity of pastoral counselors in order to facilitate an effective therapeutic relationship. As clients remain at Our House for only ninety days, it is simply not feasible to ask the client to work through possible issues of cultural discrimination. A different counselor should be re-assigned whenever residents report dissatisfaction in the therapeutic relationship.

Revisions in the Pastoral Counseling Process

In this section we will examine nine modifications to the counseling process before turning to look at the use of specific counseling modalities. First, as is evident in

many of the research partners' comments, clients often enter the shelter with a profound sense of "brokenness." Desjarlais referred to this phenomenon as feeling "unglued."⁹

Koch, Lewis and Quiñones address this feeling of brokenness when they write

For some, the simple act of gaining access to affordable housing is enough to allow them to return to lives that conform to our society's picture ... But many others enter shelter in a state of deep disorganization. They may be in shock over the violence they have suffered. They may be profoundly grieving the loss of home, family, friends, neighborhood. They may have faced lifelong poverty and abuse or only recent incidents of it; they may have faced a cascade of unanticipated events or a sudden disaster. Whatever their circumstances, as they enter shelter they have very often been robbed not only of their homes but also of precisely the abilities most needed to cope with the social condemnation and lack of resources they now face.¹⁰

Pastoral counselors and pastoral caregivers need to attempt to address such feelings of brokenness.¹¹ According to Milburn and D'Ercole, social support and coping can help the client mediate the effects of feeling broken or depressed. Therefore, the pastoral counselor seeks to validate client's feelings of brokenness, continually remind the client of her newfound sources of support, and explore with the client the many coping strategies she has enacted that have allowed her to survive hardships. We will examine this more in our discussion of solution focused therapy.

Second, the pastoral counselor and the client work collaboratively to develop treatment goals. The client is the authority on her own life. In alignment with both intercultural pastoral counseling and solution focused therapy, the counselor's agenda is not to help client adapt to the status quo but to help the client identify the ways in which she is already working toward the life she wants and can continue to do so. The homeless

⁹ Desjarlais, 112.

¹⁰ Koch, Lewis, and Quiñones, 67.

¹¹ Additional strategies for caring for such brokenness will be addressed in the discussion of the shelter as a sanctuary.

experience is replete with sources of authority who tell clients what to do and force often unwanted changes upon the life of the client. Even life in the shelter, as we will later examine, is chockfull of rules indicating what the client is to eat, when she is to sleep, and where she can and cannot spend her money. Collaborative goal setting empowers the client by reminding her of her authority and agency, focusing on the areas where she can make choices, and having the counselor serve as a resource and nurturer rather than a dictator.

The third area of change in the pastoral counseling process relates to the need, as indicated by the research partners, for clients to grow in the capacity for honest self-talk. Counselors need to assess clients' motivation as well as where they fit within the stages purported by Kuhlman, DeOllos, and Corcoran in order to determine if clients are able to be honest with themselves. Those in the first stage of each of these typologies, what Corcoran refers to as the customer type, are motivated to participate in the change process. They have a willingness to be honest with themselves and are engaged in distancing themselves from the homeless circumstance. However, as the client progresses in the stages of homelessness her willingness to be honest with how her behaviors contribute to her circumstance begins to wane. The pastoral counselor will benefit from assessing the client according to these typologies and then implementing motivational interviewing – a therapeutic modality we will later examine in more detail.

The need for the client to be honest with herself also necessitates that the pastoral counselor be honest as well. As indicated in Chapter 4, according to Orr, impoverished women seek honesty in counseling over and above empathy. They seek directive, caring confrontation rather than pity. Because we often quite literally wear our socioeconomic

status on our sleeve, homeless clients do not want to be approached by housed counselors with empathy or the attitude that they understand the homeless clients' plight. Rather, homeless clients seek care that acknowledges such difference. Pastoral counselors can help clients to become honest with themselves by modeling such honesty. Pity for the client does not mirror to the client the authority she has over her own life and does not help her to seek solutions to her current circumstance toward the life she wants. Therefore, pastoral counselors need to enact the equation put forth by Howard Clinebell: confrontation plus care equals growth.¹²

The fifth change to the pastoral counseling process requires that the counselor help the client to recognize the fallacy of self-sufficiency. According to Couture, ethics of self-sufficiency are duplicitous and unhelpful as individuals cannot be self-sufficient in their attempts to overcome hardship and oppression. Pastoral counselors need to work to empower homeless clients to take control when they can but also to recognize the network of support afforded to them through the shelter context and other networks of support. As indicated by Kuhlman and DeOllos's typologies, homeless clients often begin to develop feelings of shame and low self-worth as they come to realize that they are dependent upon others for resources. When asked how she would help others experiencing homelessness, LaToya said she would not make them feel they were dependent on her for help. Due to the likelihood of feelings of shame, as previously mentioned, it is crucial that pastoral counselors adopt a collaborative, egalitarian approach which privileges our interrelated nature and illustrates to the client that no one is truly self-sufficient. We are interconnected and, while we do our part toward our own

¹² Howard Clinebell, *Growth Counseling: Hope-Centered Methods of Actualizing Human Wholeness* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1979), 55.

growth and healing, there is much assistance that we are behooved to accept from others. This can be conveyed to the client both directly through conversation and indirectly through attitude and approach. As indicated by LaGory et al., expressive ties help clients to mitigate the effects of depression making clients who feel loved and cared for more likely to embrace their own agency.¹³

Sixth, according to Aponte, one of the three goals of therapy with the poor is to help the poor to recognize how their own ecologies, including their various cultural locations, as well as their individual and communal identities, impact their access to resources and their present circumstances. It is essential that pastoral counselors help clients to recognize the structural causes of homelessness. This is especially important for female clients as, according to the research of Tessler et al., women are more likely to cite interpersonal rather than systemic factors as contributing to their homeless circumstance. Effective pastoral counseling recognizes the both/and of individual and systemic causes but, as most other support services focus solely on the individual reasons, pastoral counseling necessitates intentional inclusion of ecological and structural factors. As previously mentioned, this requires education on the part of the pastoral counselor in order to in turn educate the client. For example, in Chapter 3 we heard how Anthony noted relational problems with his sister following his release from prison, as well as his wife's drug use, but spoke of these as personal rather than systemic problems. The savvy pastoral counselor will be able to engage Anthony around systemic issues related to release from prison, such as the fact that the \$200 "gate money" given parolees upon their release is a grossly inadequate sum on which to transition unless one has extensive support and resources. In addition, the pastoral counselor may help Anthony to

¹³ LaGory et al., "Homelessness and Affiliation," 209.

deconstruct his wife's addiction through the examination of such factors as the rampant accessibility to drugs in low SES areas and the continual "affordability" of such addictive substances.

A major focus of pastoral counseling in the homeless context needs to be attention to the client's identity. As we heard from research partners, counseling helped to provide a sense of "balance" by allowing them to "unload" and share their narratives. For some research partners, counseling provided a safe space for them to explore their past, present, and desired future identities. However, as indicated by the sociological and psychological literature, the experience of homelessness takes its toll on one's identity. During the first stages of homelessness, clients tend to distance themselves from the homeless experience and often do not even identify as homeless. This was evident in LaToya's comment that they are the most "unhomeless homeless they know." For Crystal, the case manager's insistence that she did not belong in the shelter was experienced as empowering and helped her to believe that she could find her own apartment rather than move to transitional housing. Therefore, it seems that while it is important to help clients be honest with themselves about how their choices contributed to their homelessness, for those in the first stage of homelessness it is equally important to confirm their beliefs that they do not need to be homeless. This helps the client to maintain rather than to question her identity. For clients who are no longer in the first stage of homelessness, pastoral counselors can assist the client by employing solution focused therapy questions that help the client to identify with her future identity – that is, who she sees herself as in the life that she wants.

Next, according to Kuhlman, the traditional office setting is not the most effective format for counseling in the homeless context. Rather, he advocates a walk-in format in which the counselor is readily available and accessible to the client. When asked, research partners did not admit to experiencing difficulty getting to or maintaining counseling appointments. Moreover, in the partnership between The Clinebell Institute and Our House, a walk-in format is not an easy change to make, especially given the fact that not all homeless clients will “click” with any given pastoral counselor. However, during the course of this study, IVHP hired a “program director” who maintains what I term an “open cubicle policy.” Although he often has meetings off-campus, he is frequently available and has made it known to shelter residents that his cubicle is always open. He has a background in pastoral counseling and an approachable and humorous presence. Therefore, while formal pastoral counseling format may not change at this time, it will be essential to evaluate how his presence impacts the residents’ perceived feelings of support given that during his Monday through Thursday office hours he is frequently sought out for conversation and guidance.

Finally, pastoral counselors are in a unique position to address the role of spirituality and/or religion in the lives of shelter residents.¹⁴ Based on her work in a homeless drop-in center, Wimberly posits that homelessness is often a period of “profound separation from God and communities of faith, and of struggles for deeper life

¹⁴ Beginning in the latter half of the 20th century, “spirituality” and “religion” came to be understood by many as distinctive, perhaps due to increased secularization in America. While the concepts share much in common, in this paper, spirituality is defined as, “The feelings, thoughts, experiences and behaviors that arise from a search for the sacred.” While this definition is also at the core of religion, religion entails “validation and support” of such a search for the sacred from “an identifiable group of people.” These definitions are found in the work of Peter C. Hill, Kenneth I. Pargament, Ralph W. Hood, Jr. Michelle E. McCullough, James P. Swyers, David B. Larson, and Brian J. Zinnbauer, “Conceptualizing Religion and Spirituality: Points of Commonality, Points of Departure,” *Journal for the Theory of Social Behavior* 30, no. 1 (2000): 51-77.

meaning beyond what society can provide.”¹⁵ While the empirical research in the disciplines of psychology and sociology leads me to believe she overemphasizes the disaffiliation and detachment accompanying homelessness, it seems that many of life’s major crises and transitions may result in a questioning of or separation from God. Pastoral counselors can engage shelter residents in in-depth discussion of their current faith experience and, when appropriate, help them to reframe cognitive distortions or make recommendations for possible spiritual practices or resources on which to draw. In addition, as we heard from numerous research partners and the work of John R. Belcher, faith often plays a major role in one’s ability to cope with homelessness. Pastoral counselors are uniquely suited to help shelter residents capitalize on their faith resources by engaging them in explicit conversation about how their faith functions. This may also entail connecting them to available religious resources. Pastoral counselors are often aware of the various local religious communities and can help to connect residents with communities and religious leaders in their tradition. Pastoral counselors can suggest religious or spiritual readings and practices that may aid in healing, sustaining, guiding, and liberating the resident. As IVHP is supported by nearly eighty local faith organizations, many of the volunteers are active members of such communities. Pastoral counselors can work to introduce residents to volunteers in their tradition who can then extend a gracious welcome to worship and other activities. Earlier in my tenure at the shelter I was admittedly perplexed by residents who professed to have an ardent and unwavering faith. I even questioned (only in my internal pondering) if perhaps they were engaged in magical thinking. Yet, such faith profoundly impacts one’s ability to cope and should be supported when present and fostered when not.

¹⁵ Anne Streaty Wimberly, “Spiritual Care for the Homeless,” *Explor: A Journal of Theology* 9 (1988): 85.

We now turn to examine how such revisions may be implemented. As indicated in the literature on intercultural pastoral counseling, competent intercultural caregivers enact an integrative approach that draws, as necessary, on various therapeutic modalities.

Individual pastoral counseling in the homeless context can enact the above nine revisions and effectively meet the needs articulated by the research partners by drawing on the following four therapeutic modalities: client-centered counseling, relational cultural therapy, motivational interviewing and solution focused therapy.

Client-Centered Counseling

Although one could argue that pastoral counseling has been more limited than helped by the influence of Carl Rogers, it is impossible to understate the contributions of Rogers' client-centered counseling to the practice of pastoral counseling. Howard W. Stone reviewed pastoral counseling theory penned between 1949 and 1999 and concludes that for decades the discipline was "fixated" and limited to the theories of Freud and Rogers. According to Stone, "pastoral counseling carved out its separate identity from the field of practical theology" and then failed to revisit its outdated theoretical roots, one of which was Rogers' nondirective, individualistic counseling approach.¹⁶ Nevertheless, integrating tenets of Rogers' client-centered counseling modality in practice with homeless clients aids the counselor in addressing the client's brokenness and adopting a collaborative approach. According to Rogers, the following three conditions are requisites for effective client-centered care: congruence, acceptance, and empathic understanding.¹⁷ According to Rogers, the counselor's congruence -- her ability to be

¹⁶ Howard W. Stone, "The Congregational Setting of Pastoral Counseling: A Study of Pastoral Counseling Theorists from 1949-1999," *Journal of Pastoral Care* 55, no. 2 (2001): 188.

¹⁷ Jill Snodgrass, "From Rogers to Clinebell: Exploring the History of Pastoral Psychology," *Pastoral Psychology* 55, no. 4 (2007): 513-25.

genuine and true to herself -- enables greater growth of the client. This necessitates self-awareness and, if couched within an understanding of intercultural care, allows the counselor to recognize her values but not enforce them on the client. The counselor's congruence, as well as her awareness of the limits of her congruence with each client, is essential for entering into a collaborative therapeutic relationship. Second, the counselor adopts an "unconditional positive regard" for the client.¹⁸ In doing so the counselor accepts the client's emotions and behaviors without passing judgment. Unconditional positive regard allows the client to express her profound sense of brokenness without correction or judgment on the part of the counselor. The client's emotions, experience and narrative are valued rather than evaluated. Third, although intercultural counseling recognizes the complexity of true empathy, an empathetic regard for the client is one way of conveying to the client that the counselor too is aware of the threat of homelessness. Such an attitude helps the client to experience a collaborative and egalitarian relationship although the counselor is not purporting to understand the culture of homelessness. The client remains the expert on her life and experience, but the counselor offers a perceptive, nonjudgmental presence.

Relational-Cultural Therapy

Throughout the psychological and sociological literature we read about the dangers of disaffiliation and the benefits of connection and support for those experiencing homelessness. For these reasons, pastoral counselors providing care in the homeless context are also aided by the insights of relational-cultural therapy. Relational-cultural therapy is grounded in the premise that growth results from connection with others.

¹⁸ Charles R. Ridley, "Client-Centered Therapy," in *The Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counseling*, ed. Rodney J. Hunter (Nashville: Abingdon, 1990), 177.

According to Judith Jordan, the following are the core tenets of relational-cultural therapy:

- Relational differentiation and elaboration, rather than separation, characterize growth.
- Mutuality and shared power are markers of mature functioning.
- Mutual empathy is an essential process in effective therapies.
- Therapeutic authenticity is necessary for the development of mutual empathy.¹⁹

Relational-cultural therapy is grounded in the connection between therapist and client.

The therapist attempts to share power with clients rather than to enact power over clients.²⁰ Relational-cultural therapy also serves as a foundation for the collaboration necessary for work with homeless clients.

It is vital for the therapist to act with authenticity. Such authenticity requires the therapist not to act simply as a therapeutic instrument but to be present as self in the counseling process. Often this necessitates naming difference and being willing to engage such difference toward healing and growth. Moreover, the therapist works to name explicitly the power dynamics present in the therapeutic relationship, as well as in the client's relational connections or disconnections. Therapists who are willing to be authentically present and to identify issues of power are better able to embody the honest and directive nature of counseling as called for by Orr in counseling with working-class women.

The tenets of relational-cultural therapy also aid the therapist in helping the client to understand the fallacy of self-sufficiency. According to relational-cultural therapy, connection is the goal and the ideal of the human condition. Relationships are not understood as transactional or utilitarian. Rather, they are necessary for our growth and

¹⁹ Maureen Walker, "How Relationships Heal," in *How Connections Heal: Stories from Relational-Cultural Therapy*, ed. Maureen Walker and Wendy B. Rosen (New York: Guilford, 2004), 4.

²⁰ Walker, "How Relationships Heal," 16.

mature functioning. Therefore, self-sufficiency is a fallacy that contributes to disconnection and suffering. Relational-cultural therapy is an empowering modality but it aims to empower the client in relationship rather than toward disconnection. This is especially helpful for clients in the homeless context due to the various levels of disconnection they often experience. According to Walker, “Although we most often think of disconnection or violation as an interpersonal, usually dyadic, event, it is also clear that the dominant culture itself may be the agent of wounding disconnection.”²¹ When the homeless client experiences a wounding disconnection from the larger dominant culture it further necessitates the need for the therapist to highlight the fallacy of self-sufficiency and to formulate a power-sharing relationship with the client.

Finally, relational-cultural therapy can serve as a means of helping the client to preserve her identity and to identify the structural factors related to her present homelessness. According to Walker, relational-cultural therapy recognizes the damage perpetuated by what Patricia Hill Collins terms “controlling images.”²² Controlling images function as stereotypes and serve to preserve the status quo of present power structures. Two controlling images noted by Walker include viewing black women as “Mammy” and therapists as “Perpetually Empathic.”²³ Relational-cultural therapy aims to identify the link between controlling images and relational images which represent one’s core self beliefs. In doing so, “the clinician works to uncover the link between the ‘inner working model’ of the individual and the outer workings of the broader culture.”²⁴

²¹ Maureen Walker, “Walking a Piece of the Way: Race, Power, and Therapeutic Movement,” in *How Connections Heal: Stories from Relational-Cultural Therapy*, ed. Maureen Walker and Wendy B. Rosen (New York: Guilford, 2004), 43.

²² Walker, “How Relationships Heal,” 17.

²³ Walker, “How Relationships Heal,” 17.

²⁴ Walker, “How Relationships Heal,” 18.

Specifically in working with clients beyond the first stage of homelessness, the therapist is then able to explore with the client how, by internalizing the homeless stigma and stereotype, she has negatively impacted her relational image. By exploring the client's identity or image changes in conjunction with the naming of power dynamics the therapist is then able to help the client name the structural antecedents and factors contributing to her homeless experience.

Motivational Interviewing

Motivational interviewing techniques serve as an additional resource for the pastoral counselor working in the homeless context. While motivational interviewing is also a collaborative approach, its primary contribution to work in the homeless context is helping individuals to "be honest with themselves." Although the overall approach to pastoral counseling in the homeless context should be grounded in solutions rather than problems, research partners identified the difficulty experienced during homelessness when one is not willing to be responsible for her contributing actions. Motivational interviewing can help clients who are ambivalent about accepting responsibility for their behaviors or "being honest with themselves."

According to Stephen Rollnick and William R. Miller

Motivational interviewing is a directive, client-centered counseling style for eliciting behavior change by helping clients to explore and resolve ambivalence. Compared with nondirective counselling, it is more focused and goal-directed. The examination and resolution of ambivalence is its central purpose, and the counselor is intentionally directive in pursuing this goal.²⁵

In contrast to the way in which case managers, welfare workers, and others attempt to impose motivation upon the client, motivational interviewing allows the client to address

²⁵ Stephen Rollnick and William R. Miller, "What is Motivational Interviewing?," *Behavioural and Cognitive Psychotherapy* 23 (1995): 326.

and articulate her possible ambivalence. Traditional therapeutic approaches often assert that the therapist's role is to give the client insight that she ostensibly does not have about her problems; the therapist feels the need to impart skills that the client supposedly lacks; the therapist may even go so far as to scare the client if it seems that she is not motivated toward change or does not care. In contrast to such approaches, the goal of motivational interviewing is to explore the client's ambivalence toward change and facilitate an environment and relationship that elicits "change talk."

As previously mentioned, clients who are "customers" according to Corcoran's typology are motivated to change. These clients fit within the first stage of homelessness and are ready to engage in case management and the counseling process in an effort to differentiate themselves from homelessness. However, as the client's homeless circumstance continues, it is likely that she will begin to experience resistance and become disconnected from her previous world. In such circumstances, motivational interviewing can help the client to explore her ambivalence. Based on James Prochaska's stages of change theory, homeless clients who are not ready to be honest with themselves are most likely at the precontemplation or contemplation stages of change.²⁶ Clients experiencing precontemplation are initially not motivated to change as the "problem behavior" has greater advantages than disadvantages; therefore, the counselor's role is to help the client discern the advantages and disadvantages of the problem behavior and to align the client with social supports that aid in liberation. When clients accept that there is a problem, they enter the contemplation stage and begin to think about possible change. During this stage the counselor's role is to help the client think about ways to lessen the disadvantages of change and to foster focus on the advantages of change. This

²⁶ Corcoran, 20.

researcher's experience working in the homeless context leads her to believe that most often homeless clients who are in the second stage of homelessness and beyond remain at the precontemplation and contemplation stages for the majority of the ninety day shelter stay. Determination, action, and maintenance stages of change often occur when the client is in transitional housing or in her own apartment.

Motivational interviewing empowers the client and may help to mitigate depressive symptoms by fostering a sense of mastery and agency in the client. The therapist reviews the client's past successes, explores the client's feelings of confidence for change (however minimal), and helps the client to identify her strengths and sources of support.²⁷ The therapist helps the client to reframe past failures in a way that empowers the client toward future change. Although the focus of motivational interviewing is on changing a "problem" behavior, the techniques are similar and can serve as a powerful adjunctive to the last modality under consideration, solution focused therapy.

Solution Focused Therapy

Solution focused therapy offers additional theoretical foundations and techniques to the practice of pastoral counseling in the homeless context. Solution focused therapy was developed by Steve de Shazer and Insoo Kim Berg in the late 1970s. Like the modalities explored above, solution focused therapy is also a collaborative endeavor. The client is considered the expert on her life and the belief is that the client can solve her own problems. Therefore, rather than focusing on the problems of the past, the therapist helps the client to envision a future without the problem as a means of cultivating hope and motivation for change. In addition, solution focused therapy assumes that even small

²⁷ Corcoran, 33.

change can produce a “spiral effect” that empowers the client and can result in both changed thoughts and behaviors.²⁸ According to Teri Pichot and Yvonne M. Dolan, the eight principles of solution focused therapy are as follows:

1. If it's not broken, don't fix it.
2. If something is working, do more of it.
3. If it is not working, do something different.
4. Small steps can lead to large changes.
5. The solution is not necessarily directly related to the problem.
6. The language requirements for solution development are different from those needed to describe a problem.
7. No problem happens all the time. There are always exceptions that can be utilized.
8. The future is both created and negotiable.²⁹

Solution focused therapy, as well as motivational interviewing, are appropriate to the homeless context as they are brief approaches and do not require an extensive number of sessions. Solution focused therapy reflects pastoral counseling theory in that it does not pathologize the client. Like narrative therapy, as a constructivist modality, solution focused therapy utilizes open-ended questions, including the “miracle question,” scaling questions, relationship questions, externalization of the problem, compliments, and noting exceptions, as a means of helping the client to construct a vision of her future as she desires it. In contrast to modalities such as relational-cultural therapy that do not have specific techniques, solution focused therapy is based on basic concepts, concrete questions, and a distinct way of relating to the client. However, this in no way means that it is easy to implement.

A final contribution of solution focused therapy is its ability to help the client identify and live into her future identity. As is evident in both the research partners'

²⁸ Corcoran, 6.

²⁹ Teri Pichot and Yvonne M. Dolan, *Solution-Focused Brief Therapy: Its Effective Use in Agency Settings* (Binghamton, NY: Haworth, 2003), 13.

comments and the interdisciplinary literature, homelessness can be a time of lost identity and clients benefit from finding “balance” between their past and present selves through the counseling process and relationship. Solution focused therapy can help to empower the client to envision her future identity and the life that she desires. As a constructivist approach, the client constructs her own meaning and reality. Therefore, she is empowered not only to construct the world as she wishes to see it but also her role and identity. This can be a transformative process for clients who feel stigmatized for their homeless status and oppressed by their current circumstance.

By integrating the insights and techniques of client-centered therapy, relational-cultural therapy, motivational interviewing, and solution focused therapy, pastoral counselors working in the homeless context will be better equipped to meet the needs identified by the research partners and the interdisciplinary literature. The approach of all these modalities is collaborative, empowering, honest, future oriented, strengths-based, and supportive. The client sets her own treatment goals and the counselor helps her to take responsibility for her present behavior, as well as her future, and to recognize how her social ecology and systemic factors impact her present experience.

Group Counseling

As indicated in Chapter 3, according to Cohen, “Groups have been used successfully with homeless people to foster empowerment, promote mutual aid, stimulate creativity, build skills, provide community education, increase consumer input into agency decision making, and generate social action.”³⁰ However, numerous questions related to the group counseling process emerge based upon the research partners’ comments. First, some research partners commented that they do not want to attend

³⁰ Marcia B. Cohen, 641.

group counseling. It is in the evening and cuts into the limited hours that they have to be in the shelter doing laundry, caring for their children, and completing necessary tasks and chores. Second, research partners shared a need for conflict mediation, but noted that at times the group resulted in greater conflict as members did not openly share their thoughts and feelings. Third, depending on the particular shelter residents, it can be a major challenge to formulate group cohesion when the residents are living in such close quarters and inevitably tension results. This leads the researcher to question, “What is the goal of the group?”

In part due to the limited skills of the pastoral counseling residents, as well as the steep learning curve involved in understanding the homeless context, when The Clinebell Institute first began offering group counseling services at Our House it was limited to psychoeducation and skill building. Groups addressed parenting skills, anger, stress and time management, interview skills, communication skills, personality assessment and more. However, it is evident both from the research partners’ comments, as well as the literature, that effective group work in the homeless context facilitates empowerment, mutuality and support. In addition, during the course of this study IVHP contracted with the YWCA to begin offering life skills courses such as financial literacy and job interviewing skills, and the residents continue to attend the mandatory weekly Parents Anonymous meetings.

Therefore, revised group pastoral counseling praxis focuses on addressing conflict in the shelter, empowering residents, and creating a safe and mutual living environment.³¹ In addition, the group provides an excellent forum for educating residents on the

³¹ Only in instances of extreme disruption does the IVHP staff address conflict in the shelter during weekly house meetings. Doing this on a weekly basis allows a predictable forum for the residents and in many ways may help to prevent extreme conflict in the shelter.

oppressive structures that contribute to homelessness and economic injustice. Toward this end, the group process will draw upon empowerment strategies and solution focused group practices. These approaches go hand in hand and allow the pastoral counselor to aid in the healing, sustaining, guiding, reconciling, nurturing, empowering and liberating of the group members. Although childcare should continue to be offered at its current location outside the shelter, the group counseling itself should occur in the shelter. This aids in dissolving the us/them dichotomy, as the counselor will come to “our house” rather than the residents going to “our office.” The two hour group counseling process will be divided into three segments: the first thirty minutes will be spent checking in and addressing any conflict in the shelter; the second thirty minutes will utilize an empowerment approach to help members identify the impact of systemic oppression; and the final sixty minutes will draw on solution focused group methods to enable members to help one another toward empowerment and change en route to the lives they desire.

Based on the input of research partners, it is important that group counseling be a safe and accessible forum for residents to share any potential conflicts that arise within the shelter context. This can be done in a systematic manner in which clients voice their complaints using the WWWF rubric – What happened, with Who, When and where, and how it made the client Feel.³² Each group member will be given the opportunity to express her complaint, empathy (although not agreement) will be shown to each client by the counselor and other group members, and, if necessary, problem solving strategies will be employed.

³² Marline E. Pearson, *Love U2: Communication Smarts* (Berkeley: Dibble Fund for Marriage Education, 2004).

The second portion of the group will focus on empowerment in the face of oppressive realities. According to Judith A. B. Lee

There are three interlocking dimensions of empowerment: 1) the development of a more positive and potent sense of self; 2) the construction of knowledge and capacity for more critical comprehension of the web of social and political realities of one's environment; and 3) the cultivation of resources and strategies, or more functional competence, for attainment of personal and collective goals.³³

According to Lee, a sense of power is essential for healthy self-esteem. Therefore, if the client perceives herself to be powerful over her own life as well as her environment then she is more likely to feel a sense of self-worth. Toward this end, the pastoral counselor does not tell group members about their reality, but becomes a "coinvestigator" with the group in order to determine oppressive structures.³⁴ This helps the pastoral counselor to collaborate and align herself with the clients in a way that seeks to abolish the us/them dichotomy present between shelter residents and staff. Moreover, in alignment with relational-cultural therapy, it is critical that the pastoral counselor be authentically present by engaging in personal sharing, especially as it relates to issues of cultural location and power.³⁵ The pastoral counselor aims to facilitate member-to-member communication, as they are the experts on their lives.

Lee advocates employing an empowerment group approach constructed by Ellen Pence.³⁶ According to Lee, the group format consists of the following five steps:

1. Begin with a survey of what is on people's minds.
2. Choose a theme, posing problems in question form.
3. Analyze the problems on the personal, institutional, and cultural levels.
4. Develop a code (picture,

³³ Judith A. B. Lee, *The Empowerment Approach to Social Work Practice* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 13.

³⁴ Lee, *Empowerment Approach*, 117.

³⁵ Lee, *Empowerment Approach*, 123.

³⁶ Ellen Pence, *In Our Best Interests: A Process for Personal and Social Change* (Duluth, MN: Duluth Domestic Abuse Intervention Project, 1987).

chart, play, poem) to reflect further on the problem. 5. Develop options for action in all three areas of analysis; then act together and reflect again.³⁷

This allows group members to collectively brainstorm about the systemic issues that present power blocks in their lives and to share emotions related to such disempowering circumstances. Sample themes for the group include having to work harder than people of other races, the isolation of single parenting, fighting against government employees to secure one's rightful benefits, etc. Many of these themes are relevant to residents of all races. Engaging in such topics may aid mixed race groups in identifying a "shared reality" with residents of other races, thus increasing empathy and understanding. This approach will enable clients to experience group cohesion, specifically when it relates to shared realities, and to cultivate a sense of agency.

The final sixty minutes of the group will utilize a solution focused therapeutic approach by drawing on the work of Teri Pichot and Yvonne M. Dolan, as well as Linda Metcalf.³⁸ Foremost, in order to implement such an approach, it is crucial that the pastoral counselor believe that group members are capable and competent enough to solve their own problems and to change their lives. The pastoral counselor is the facilitator of a process rather than the authority over group members. The pastoral counselor begins by inviting group members to answer an introduction question, such as "What is one thing that you are proud of that no one else knows about you?" or "What is one thing that you have done between now and last time you were here that has helped you get closer to your goal?"³⁹ The pastoral counselor looks for common themes among the group members in an attempt to identify what may be important to most if not all

³⁷ Lee, *Empowerment Approach*, 223.

³⁸ Pichot and Dolan; Linda Metcalf, *Solution Focused Group Therapy: Ideas for Groups in Private Practice, Schools, Agencies, and Treatment Programs* (New York: Free Press, 1998).

³⁹ Pichot and Dolan, 50.

group members and then names that theme aloud and notes the members' similarities. The pastoral counselor requests the permission of all group members to look further into the particular theme as a means of demonstrating equity and collaboration. Next, the pastoral counselor poses the miracle question, asking the group members to imagine that they are reunited one year from now. The pastoral counselor asks each member to identify how, if the given theme is no longer present in her life at the time of the reunion, she would be different. By drawing on commonalities among the group members' responses, the pastoral counselor builds group cohesion while at the same time looking for the ways in which such realities may already be present in group members' lives. The next step is to pose a scaling question. For instance, "On a scale of one to ten (ten is that you are handling life's difficulties just how you would want to handle them, and one is the opposite), where would you put yourself today?"⁴⁰ The pastoral counselor then finds out where on the scale the group members think others would rate them and what they are doing to merit such a rating. The counselor tries to identify specific behaviors of each group member that give their friends and family that impression. The group counseling session concludes by each member assigning herself homework, such as living one day as if the problem were gone or writing a few sentences about how the group counseling is helpful, before the pastoral counselor provides feedback to the group.

Given the scope of this study it is impossible to outline fully the necessary revisions to the group counseling process. However, based on the research partners' experiences and the interdisciplinary literature it is evident that group counseling needs to offer a forum to address personality conflict in the shelter, both through conflict mediation and by forming a sense of group cohesion. The group endeavors to empower

⁴⁰ Pichot and Dolan, 65.

clients to feel a sense of agency over both their personal lives and their environment, which may best be accomplished through empowerment and solution focused techniques.

Revised Pastoral Care Praxis by Staff

Research partners spoke extensively about the support they received through the pastoral care practices of shelter staff. They maintained that the staff would “lift you up” and always tell you not to give up. They reported feeling able to go to the office at any time for assistance or just to talk. However, based upon the research partners’ experiences and the interdisciplinary literature review, three distinctive recommended revisions are in order. First, staff should be encouraged to work collaboratively with residents on shelter decision-making processes. According to Ingram, Corning and Schmidt, shelters that “use a hierarchical model of service delivery may inadvertently discourage a sense of personal efficacy.”⁴¹ Rather, sharing power with residents and giving them a participatory role in the shelter environment is a means of empowerment. As Cohen so aptly contends, “Homeless people, like all people, do not respond well to professionals who claim to know what is best for them, disregarding their preferences.”⁴² Citing a study by Dordick, Cohen describes how hierarchical service structures incline residents to identify with the staff and thus suffer from internalized oppression. As a result, they do not develop mutual relationships with other shelter residents and pass their days in adherence to shelter rules and following strict routines. Hierarchical service structures therefore exacerbate an us/them dichotomy between shelter residents and staff. DeOllos observed this in her own research, noting that by differentiating themselves from the residents the staff created barriers and divisions that prohibited residents from

⁴¹ Ingram, Corning and Schmidt, 225.

⁴² Marcia B. Cohen, 645.

identifying with “housed” peers. Some concrete ways in which staff may share power with residents would be to spend more time in the shelter, allow residents to design their own menus and chore duties, permit residents to plan for special events and outings, and treat residents in a way that recognizes they have the skills and aptitude to run a household.

Second, evident throughout the many calls for revision is the need for all caregivers to adopt a collaborative attitude. The psychological literature advocates abandoning neutrality by taking on the role of advocate. Research partners also voiced such requests. One research partner shared that he wished someone would go with him to look for work as continual rejection starts to get one down. Another partner stated that if staff are really doing everything they can to help you, then they need to make that clear. Otherwise, as she claimed, the residents don’t feel like they’re on a team working toward their own liberation. Therefore, staff need to “live among the poor” in Gutierrez’s terms in an effort to empower residents to transcend, rather than leaving residents to wonder if they’re doing all they can. Staff need to get in the trenches, so to speak, with clients by accompanying them to what are often dehumanizing experiences, such as welfare offices, job searches, and court proceedings. As Martin Luther King, Jr. said, “It’s all right to tell a man to lift himself by his own bootstraps, but it is a cruel jest to say to a bootless man that he ought to lift himself by his own bootstraps.”⁴³ Accompanying residents may require changes in shelter staff. Previously the case manager worked full time; however, during the tenure of this research the case manager left and her replacement now works

⁴³ Martin Luther King, Jr., “Remaining Awake Through a Great Revolution,” in *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, ed. James Melvin Washington (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991), 271.

only two days per week. Obviously such accompaniment would require significant time outside the office.

Third, all of the above is predicated on the staff's ability to treat people with dignity and respect. It is essential that staff recognize, in the words of Martin Luther King, Jr., that everybody is somebody. Recall the comment made by Jennifer

It's like how she talks to us cause you know how when you have a job and you have a boss and the boss has a certain like stance that I am the boss. I have the title like I'm on that level and you're not. It's similar to that and [the volunteer] was just like regular. Because I think like you could be a boss and you could be on a higher level and still be decent with people. Don't treat people like this. Like they have the potential to do what you're doing. Show them what you're doing. Have, make them on your level. If you're better, then show them you know ... Even people who didn't deserve it, it wasn't like, [the volunteer] didn't say like no you don't deserve this. She took everybody. We were all equal. It was cool.

The difference between the staff person and the volunteer was that the volunteer recognized that she, Jennifer, and the other residents were all on the same level and she talked to them and treated them with equity. Jennifer's comment illustrates well what Martin Luther King, Jr. calls the perversion of the drum major instinct. According to King each of us longs to be a leader, to be the drum major and conduct the parade. However, the drum major instinct "can lead one to feel that because he has some training, he's a little better than that person that doesn't have it, or because he has some economic security, that he's a little better than the person who doesn't have it. And that's the uncontrolled, perverted use of the drum major instinct."⁴⁴ We heard this same critique from Freddie who, when talking with his case manager, was reminded of her educational achievements in comparison to his. Working in this context requires awareness by staff

⁴⁴ Martin Luther King, Jr., "The Drum Major Instinct," in *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, ed. James Melvin Washington (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991), 263.

that while they cannot fully understand the residents' experiences, they need to treat residents with explicit care and compassion. It is simply impossible for staff to be in collaborative relationships and empower clients toward growth and stability if residents are treated as derelicts.

Revised Pastoral Care Praxis by Volunteers

The recommended revisions on the part of staff also apply to the work of volunteers; however, four additional revisions in volunteer practice are germane. In some cases, changes require action on the part of religious leaders in the organizations from which such volunteers emerge. First, in light of the insights of Johnson and Gutierrez, it is important that volunteers be educated on the difference between service and justice. According to Johnson and Gutierrez, rather than denouncing their power in acts of servanthood, valued volunteers own and harness their power in a way that seeks to help the poor toward their own uplift. Power should not be abandoned in service but should be shared. In order to be stewards of their resources and privilege, volunteers are intentional about service in order that it be justice-seeking.

Therefore, the researcher recommends educating volunteers in Poling's nine-stage theory of spiritual growth.⁴⁵ Such education would be most effectively provided by the leaders or clergy in the volunteers' own organization as it would allow the incorporation of particular religious or spiritual beliefs and convey, at an institutional level, the privileging of justice over service. The Clinebell Institute could work with local leaders toward training and implementation of this knowledge. Poling's nine steps toward transformation are intended to help caregivers, specifically middle-class caregivers, to enact justice in a way that enhances both their own spiritual growth and that of the

⁴⁵ Poling, *Render Unto God*, 236.

carereceiver. Brief mention will be made of each of these nine steps in order to demonstrate how they help to transform acts of service into acts of justice.

First, it is indispensable for volunteers to be open and receptive to those who come into our lives requesting care. Volunteers need to recognize that they, as caregiver, and the other, as carereceiver, are often equally transformed by such experiences. Second, volunteers provide better care by being open to listening and believing the life stories and experiences of those they serve. Third, the volunteer seeks knowledge. Poling writes

The initial moments of spiritual breakthrough come when we find ourselves receptive to the witness of those who have deep faith through suffering. But these moments of receptivity must be followed by disciplined study and information.⁴⁶

Fourth, it is crucial that volunteers possess the courage to act. It is not enough simply to hear stories of suffering and oppression; rather, we need to become engaged and committed in the struggle. Willingness to enter worlds that we do not know with courage and trust in God is critical to effective volunteer work. Fifth, volunteering requires accompaniment. By accompanying the homeless, the volunteer enters into solidarity to whatever extent possible. According to Poling

Accompaniment on the personal level means staying in close contact through the difficulties and victories of daily life and providing mutual support for one another depending on the needs. On the organizational level, it means working together toward common goals, each contributing what is needed to survive oppression.⁴⁷

The next step in Poling's nine-stage theory of spiritual growth is transformation of self and congregation. Through accompaniment and a willingness to be vulnerable, transformation occurs often both within individual volunteers as well as within their larger faith communities. However, the next step entails making long-term commitments.

⁴⁶ Poling, *Render Unto God*, 238.

⁴⁷ Poling, *Render Unto God*, 240.

It is simply not enough for individuals or faith communities to drop in and out of justice-seeking as time and resources permit. Rather, according to Poling, long-term commitments are necessary because opportunities for justice-seeking can never be exhausted and issues of justice and oppression take time.

The eighth step in Poling's theory is prophetic action. Poling states, "Individual actions of accompaniment, while critically important for ongoing work, are not enough. Systemic change will require concerted efforts of large groups of people working together."⁴⁸ Poling cites numerous organizations already in existence with which volunteers can partner in justice-seeking endeavors. Finally, the ninth step is transformation of worship and community life. According to Poling, intentional worship and liturgy reflect the spiritual transformation that occurs as the result of justice-seeking and practicing goodness. It is by changing worship and liturgy that the entire faith community is transformed. By understanding Poling's nine-stage theory of spiritual transformation, new meaning will be imbued in the work of the volunteers at Our House. They will be able to discern the difference between service and justice in a way that fosters economic stewardship in alignment with Biblical prophecy.

Research partners' insights in addition to the literature review also lead to three additional calls for revised praxis by volunteers. First, the residents of Our House, especially those with young children, need quality childcare. Whether to attend counseling, complete job applications, or wait in line at the social security office, the stress and strain of parenting is a significant burden in the lives of shelter families. While informal networks of support do arise within the shelter and residents often turn to one

⁴⁸ Poling, *Render Unto God*, 244.

another for childcare assistance, research partners and their children would greatly benefit from further childcare support.

Second, numerous research partners noted how their faith served as a motivating factor and helped them to get up when they felt down. However, no formal religious or spiritual outlets are available to shelter residents. Faith organizations visit the shelter each Sunday evening to provide dinner and often to offer prayer and fellowship. If desired, residents engage in spiritual and religious conversation as it relates to the pastoral counseling process. However, given the number of research partners who drew so heavily on their own faith reserve to transcend their homeless circumstance, it would seem appropriate for volunteers and/or local religious leaders to offer optional Bible study or other spiritual practices to interested shelter residents. We will return to this topic shortly.

Finally, volunteers and supporting faith organizations should strive to make “Christmas” come more than once a year. It is a heart-warming experience to hear research partners reflect on the generosity and care they feel during Christmas at the shelter. However, it is simply unchristian to limit one’s benevolence and stewardship to the numbered days of advent. Of course one could argue that volunteers’ generosity over the holidays is more charity than justice; nevertheless, the provision of resources is an important way in which research partners reported feeling cared for, whether that be comforters for the whole family at Christmas or shampoo provided to them each week by shelter staff.

Transforming Shelters into Sanctuaries

According to research partners, when they first enter the shelter there is a sense of “brokenness.” Three changes to the shelter program would help it to be a place of

sanctuary -- an environment that feels more like “our house.” First, amendments to shelter rules and regulations would help to facilitate a more caring environment. As indicated by Fogel in Chapter 3, it is important to distinguish rules that are toward residents’ “self-sufficiency” from those that are for “goodness-of-fit” in the shelter.⁴⁹ It seems that the requirement to be out of the shelter between nine a.m. and four p.m. does not promote self-sufficiency during the initial part of residents’ stay. By allowing residents to remain in the shelter between nine and four during the first two weeks of their stay they would be better equipped to heal from their “brokenness” and utilize both case management and counseling in an effective manner. Obviously some residents are working and they would not benefit from this change. However, for the residents at the first stage of homelessness, this change would allow them to capitalize on those two weeks in which they distance themselves from homelessness and feel more empowered to transcend their current circumstance. It would facilitate comfort at a time when most are not experiencing resignation. Furthermore, as we heard from the research partners, time is altered during homelessness and it takes significant time for residents to realign the many aspects of their lives affected by being homeless. Permitting them greater access to the sanctuary of the shelter during the first two weeks of their ninety-day program would facilitate emotional health and better time management.

Second, research partners recommended that a staff Resident Assistant (R.A.) be employed to live at the shelter rather than assigning duties to a shelter resident. This amendment would help the shelter to be a sanctuary -- a place of safety, healing, and empowerment -- in a variety of ways. The R.A. would help to ensure the safety of shelter residents. Research partners commented on knives in the shelter as well as violence and

⁴⁹ Fogel, 131.

drug use. A staff presence would decrease such threats to safety in a way that is difficult for the R.A. to do when she is a resident. The R.A. would be trained in pastoral care and conflict mediation. Therefore, she could provide empowering soul care to the residents in addition to helping mediate the numerous conflicts that arise due to the motley personalities present in the shelter. The R.A. would be someone who, on a daily basis, would treat the residents with respect and value their contributions to “our house.” As we heard from both the research partners and the literature review, rules play a major role in the life of the residents and the shelter. Rules are a source of added stress to which residents are simply expected to comply. A staff R.A. would be able to work with residents to create their own rules for governing the shelter. For example, the rule that all children should be in their rooms at eight p.m. may be appropriate for younger children but not for adolescents. Residents could work collaboratively with the staff resident assistant to create or adjust rules to be more appropriate for the current cohort of residents. Moreover, the R.A. would work to create and enforce rules that promote self-sufficiency, such as those that cultivate life skills like cooking and cleaning, while other rules would no longer be needed.

Finally, transforming the shelter into a sanctuary for the residents requires that greater attention be paid to their spiritual and religious needs. As IVHP receives support from approximately 80 faith communities, it is in a unique position to meet the holistic needs of Our House residents. While recognizing the injustice committed by homeless rescue or gospel mission that granted services only to those who professed belief in

Christ (hopefully a thing of the past), the limited attention to residents' spiritual and religious needs is grievous as well.⁵⁰ Three aspects of revised praxis are thus in order.

First, given that the majority of supporting faith communities and the majority of shelter residents are Christian, volunteers could help sustain or buttress residents' faith through Bible study. As residents are required to return to the shelter by seven each evening, a weekly Bible study could be offered by volunteers or ministers from the supporting faith organizations one evening per week in the offices adjacent to the shelter. If child care were provided, this would provide interested residents with a tranquil environment in which to reflect on the Word and receive the faith-filled support of others.

Second, while many residents profess a religious orientation, few residents are currently active in a faith community. Therefore, by providing residents with a directory of the 80 faith organizations that support IVHP, they could select a particular church, temple, mosque, etc. and IVHP's faith relations coordinator could work with such organizations to provide transportation to services and a hospitable welcome. Not only would this attempt to meet the residents' spiritual or religious needs, but it would also bridge the gap that so often results between those serving and those being served. If faith communities are genuinely interested in seeking justice for the homeless then they will gladly open their doors to welcome the residents of Our House into their own sacred spaces.

Third, local religious leaders, volunteers, or pastoral counseling residents can help to facilitate holistic care and meet residents' faith needs by offering a time of meditation. This would be a time of spiritual centering, devoid of specific religious content, in which

⁵⁰ According to Joanne Mied, such services began in America in the early 19th century and aimed to meet the material needs of the homeless, but also to convert them. Joanne Mied, "Pastoral Counseling of the Homeless," *Pure Land* 18-19 (2002): 241.

residents would be guided in meditative practice and/or invited into a space of contemplative silence. If desired, a time at the end could be reserved for residents to share their spiritual reflections or seek the prayerful support of others in the group. Again, child care is requisite for any offering of this type and, in contrast to most shelter offerings, attendance cannot be required.

Summary

In no way are the above recommendations for revised praxis considered to be solutions or a quick-fix to caring for the homeless. Rather, exercises in practical theology are a never-ending endeavor as current practice continuously necessitates evaluation in light of theory and the sources of authority. It is a dynamic process that continues to reveal how God is speaking to the present lived circumstance. Nevertheless, the above call for revised praxis reflects the experiences of the research partners and the insights of interdisciplinary literature and is focused on the residents' strengths in an effort to empower them toward healing and wholeness. This requires changes on the part of pastoral counselors and caregivers as well as within the shelter context. Implementing such revised praxis therefore requires training and education of staff, counselors and volunteers to demonstrate, in a grounded way, the benefit of such augmented ways of operating.

CHAPTER 6

Conclusion and Contributions

In an effort to call for revised praxis of pastoral care and counseling within the homeless context, this dissertation offers correctives to particular sources of authority in both the social sciences and theology, as well as to current pastoral care and counseling practice at Our House. With an inadequate amount of literature focusing on pastoral care and homelessness -- and not a single resource, written from a Christian perspective, engaging pastoral counseling in the homeless context -- this empirical practical theology makes significant contribution to a deficit in the literature. Due, in part, to the dearth of empirical research on homelessness within the Christian literature broadly, perhaps the greatest contribution of this study is its methodology. As noted in Chapter 3, a significant majority of articles and books exploring homelessness from a Christian perspective elevates the voices of the “witnesses” of homelessness, those working in the field, but not the homeless themselves. In contrast, this study constructs an approach to pastoral care and counseling that privileges the opinions of the true experts -- those in the shelter.

In reflecting on how the research partners’ experiences offer correctives to the theory, it became apparent that they speak more to the theological resources than the psychological and sociological literature. In part this is because the theological sources of authority selected in this study do not explicitly address homelessness; however, this fact also relates to the methods employed. Whereas many of the scholars writing in the disciplines of psychology and sociology also employ empirical research that privileges the voices of the homeless, the theological resources do not. The correctives offered to such theological resources evidence the value of practical theology and Browning’s

critical correlational method, and reflect an engaged pastoral theology. Take, for instance, James Newton Poling's call for ministers and caregivers to identify economic differences and oppressions, as well as issues of economic privilege and power, in work with both clients and congregations. Poling develops a tool for diagnosing economic vulnerability, which contains middle class biases and, without amendment, is inappropriate for work in the homeless context. While Poling does not argue that this tool is applicable to all contexts, it is only through engagement in practical theology that such correctives can be offered.

Finally, as scholars in all disciplines begin to recognize the value of interdisciplinary scholarship, this study adds to a growing body of resources available to faith organizations that seek to engage in justice rather than service. Theological and biblical imperatives to serve the poor must be examined through such lenses as economics, sociology, and public policy if they are to be truly liberative for God's people. This study's interdisciplinary foundation recognizes God's role in all creation and the importance of a "living human web."

In Hindsight

Given what I know now, it is helpful to reflect now upon my bias as researcher; in addition, there are three aspects of this study that I would revise. As noted in Chapter 2, research of this type of requires reflexivity. Although I do not recall the first time I was told that some homeless people want to be homeless, I do remember reading such sentiments in the course of this research and believing them to be ridiculous. In reflecting now on my research, my clinical work with the residents of Our House, the comments of the research partners, and my own participant observation, I ask myself if there are

shelter residents who do not seem motivated to work. Yes. Are there shelter residents who appear to accept living off of social benefits and welfare? Yes. Is my interpretation of their behavior colored by my socioeconomic and educational achievements? Most definitely. Therefore, my bias as a researcher is that I believe the culture of homelessness, much like the culture of consumerism, is created in dialectic. That is to say, in utilizing shelters, the homeless both influence or determine the services they are offered, but, in turn, are influenced and determined by such services. The homeless are constructed by the system of services just as much, if not more than, they help to construct the system. Do some homeless persons desire to be homeless? Surely it's conceivable. Is this choice made sans system influences and oppressions? No way. Therefore, I realize more than ever my bias that the system and structural factors are arguably more influential in the lives of the homeless than "characterological deficits." Moreover, I believe a case could be made that many of *all* characterological deficits are byproducts of systemic oppression. Nevertheless, I am reminded of Archie Smith's contention that systemic change is only impossible if one makes a false idol of the system, believing it to be immutable and omnipresent.¹

In hindsight there are three aspects of this study I would change. First, I would conduct research at a shelter where I had no previous relationships with staff or residents. It is likely that my relationship to Our House colored the responses of my research partners perhaps more than in an alternate shelter context where I have no past or present contact. While my position at Our House may have comforted some research partners and put them at ease, I would also not be surprised if research partners, especially those who

¹ Archie Smith, *The Relational Self: Ethics and Therapy from a Black Church Perspective* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1982), 177.

were homeless at the time of the interview, censored their comments. In addition, my administrative and clinical positions at Our House made it difficult to interview shelter staff, which is the second amendment I would make.

Based on my findings, the second aspect of this study I would revise in hindsight would be to interview the children of research partners about their homeless experience as well as interview the shelter staff. The care of children in the shelter is largely left to their parents, but, as evident from the research partners' comments, homeless parenting can be highly stressful. Children are equally in need of pastoral care and counseling services as their parents, if not more so. Interviews with shelter staff would aid the analysis of how support is offered and received. For instance, while some research partners experienced the housing manager's attitude as tough and uncaring, perhaps she is aware of this and finds that it fosters shelter residents' resilience. Interviews with shelter staff would help to create a dialogue between staff and residents, and the needs and goals of both those providing and receiving pastoral care.

Finally, engaging the leaders and volunteers who represent the supporting faith organizations through participant observation and/or interviews as well would provide insight into if or how they understand the justice aspect of their service. Such engagement would aid in the construction of a volunteer training program. It would also serve as a means for educating, and being educated by, religious leaders and their theological reflections on serving the homeless.

Future Directions for Research

The above section details the following three necessary directions for future research: conducting research at alternate shelters and engaging homeless children,

shelter staff, and the leaders and volunteers from the supporting faith organizations in the research process. In addition, this study is limited to the perspectives of the sixteen research partners and my own participant observation. Future research should include a larger sample population. Replicating this study at another shelter would help to control for research partners' possible bias due to the researcher's position. In addition, such a study would create an additional aspect of triangulation and enhance reliability. Studies such as these are always strengthened by collaboration; therefore, a research team would benefit this type of study in contrast to a sole researcher. Finally, scholars in the discipline of pastoral counseling need to engage diverse populations, including the homeless, in order to construct theory and praxis that are relevant to the diversity of God's children. For decades pastoral theologians and counselors named the limitations of the "medical model" of counseling and the European American, middle class, male bias of the practice; yet, if this is to change, then we must leave the center and join the margins if such care and counsel is to be relevant, rather than assuming that all theories apply to all contexts.

Appendix A

Semi-Structured Interview Questions

1. What led you to stay at the Our House Shelter?
2. How was your experience as a resident at the Our House Shelter? What were the positives? What were the negatives?
3. What, if any, were your sources of support during your stay at the Shelter (for example, family, friends, other shelter residents, staff, religious organizations, other communities)?
4. What sources of support do you wish you had that you did not?
5. What was the most stressful aspect of your experience at Our House Shelter? In looking back, is there anything that would have helped you to cope with that stress?
6. What was (is) the most challenging aspect of being homeless?
7. What was your experience in the group counseling? Is there anything you would change about the group to make it more helpful to you?
8. Did you attend an intake session with a counselor from The Clinebell Institute? How was that experience for you?
9. Did you attend ongoing counseling with a counselor from The Clinebell Institute?
 - a. If so, what was helpful and what would you have changed? If you feel comfortable sharing, what kinds of issues did you address in counseling? How did your gender, race, age, sexual orientation, family background, etc. impact your experience in counseling? Do you feel that your counselor recognized your unique situation as ... (e.g. a single African American mother of three; a 22-year-old bisexual Hispanic female; etc.)? Did the gender, race, age, sexual orientation, socioeconomic background of the counselor impact your counseling experience? How was it for you to schedule and attend counseling appointments? In looking back, is there anything you would change about the counseling you received?
 - b. If you did not participate in counseling, what factors influenced your decision?
10. What sustained you during your experience of homelessness?
11. Did you interact with any volunteers at the shelter? If so, how? What do you think about the support programs at IVHP such being served dinner by people from churches or other faith organizations, Vacation Bible School, Adopt-a-Family?
12. What was your experience with volunteers?
13. If you could offer care to someone while they're homeless, what types of care do you think they would need?

Appendix B

Informed Consent for Interviews¹

Introduction: My name is Jill Snodgrass and I am a Ph.D. student at Claremont School of Theology, 1325 N. College Ave., Claremont CA, 91711. I am conducting an ethnographic study as part of my dissertation research. My research supervisor is Dr. Kathleen Greider, Professor of Pastoral Care and Counseling at Claremont School of Theology. You can reach her at the School by calling 909.447.2540. You can reach me at 815.404.3468. Please contact either of us at any time if you have questions about this study.

Purpose: The purpose of this research is to study the experience of homelessness and of the services offered at the Our House Shelter. Especially, I am trying to learn more about how pastoral care and counseling services are experienced by shelter residents.

Procedure: If you consent, you will be asked several questions in an oral interview that will take place at one of the following locations: the administrative offices of IVHP, your home, a public place near your current residence, or at the offices of The Clinebell Institute. I will make a digital audio recording of the interview which will be destroyed following the completion of the dissertation.

In addition, if you consent to allow the researcher access to your client file at The Clinebell Institute, please initial on the line: _____

Time required: The interview will take approximately 1-2 hours of your time.

Voluntary participation: Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. If you choose to participate, you may still refuse to answer any question that you do not wish to answer. You may also withdraw from the study at any time.

Risks: There are no known risks associated with this interview. However, it is possible that you might feel distress in the course of the conversation. If this happens, please inform me promptly.

Benefits: While this is no guaranteed benefit, it is possible that you will enjoy sharing your answers to these questions or that you will find the conversation meaningful. This study is intended to benefit the Our House Shelter, The Clinebell Institute, and area faith organizations by enlivening our discourse on the theology and practice of pastoral care and counseling with homeless individuals and families.

Confidentiality/Anonymity: Your name will be kept confidential in all of the reporting and/or writing related to this study. I may alter some identifying details in order to further protect your anonymity. I will be the only person present for the interview and the only person who listens to the recordings. When I write my report of the research findings, I will use pseudonyms – made up names – for all participants, unless you specify in writing at the bottom of this form that you wish to be identified by name. If you wish to choose your own pseudonym for the study, please indicate the first name you would like me to use for you here: _____.

Sharing the results: I plan to construct an ethnography – written account of what I learn – based on these interviews together with my reading and historical research. This ethnography will be submitted to the faculty of the Claremont School of Theology in November 2009.

I also plan to share what I learn from this study with the staff at IVHP. Portions of the ethnography may be printed and made available.

Publication: There is the possibility that I will publish this study or refer to it in published writing in the future. In this event, I will continue to protect your anonymity, as described above.

¹ Adapted with permission from a sample consent form. Mary Clark Moschella, *Ethnography as a Pastoral Practice: An Introduction* (Cleveland: Pilgrim, 2008), 96-97.

Before you sign:

By signing below, you are agreeing to a recorded interview for this research study. Be sure that any questions you may have are answered to your satisfaction. If you agree to participate in this study, a copy of this document will be given to you.

Participant's signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Print Name:

Researcher's signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Print Name:

If you wish to be identified by name, please sign here:

Appendix C

Templates for Intake Interview Questions

Identifying Data:

Presenting Problems w/ Precipitant for coming to counseling:

History of Presenting Problems, including SI/HI Assessment:

Past Clinical History:

Inpatient Treatment:

Outpatient Treatment:

Medical History/Concerns/Medication:

Current Functioning:

Academic/Career:

Social Relationship:

Family Relationship:

Spiritual/Religious:

Family History of Mental Illness:

Abuse History:

Ethical/Legal Issues/History and Current:

Substance Use:

Alcohol:

Tobacco:

Cannabis:

Other:

Mental Status Exam:

Appearance/attire:

Speech:

Content:

Eye contact:

Oriented x 4:

Cooperative:

Judgment:

Insight:

Mood:

Affect:

DSM-IV:

AXIS I:

AXIS II:

AXIS III:

AXIS IV:

AXIS V:

Current GAF:

Long-term GAF:

Overall Assessment including Client assets and strengths and Counselor's assessment of abuse and other safety issues:

Treatment Plan:

Appendix D

SERVING
 Chino, Chino Hills,
 Claremont,
 Diamond Bar,
 La Verne, Montclair,
 Mt. Baldy, Pomona,
 Ontario,
 Rancho Cucamonga,
 San Dimas, Upland,
 and Walnut



"Caring In Action"

December 8, 2008

To Whom It May Concern:

As Executive Director of the Inland Valley Council of Churches, doing business as Inland Valley Hope Partners, I am familiar with and in support of Jill Snodgrass' dissertation research examining pastoral care and counseling and homelessness.

I am available for any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Wylske G. Visser
 Executive Director
wylskev@hope-partners.com

1753 N. Park Avenue
 Pomona, CA 91768

Phone: 909.622.3806
 Fax: 909.622.0484
 Email: tolvcc@verizon.net
www.hope-partners.com

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